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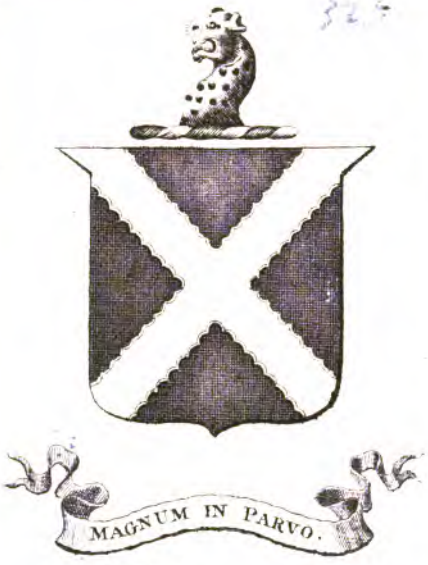

Wm Hunter Little.

ELOISA;

A SERIES

OF ORIGINAL LETTERS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE ADVENTURES OF LORD B—— AT ROME;

BEING THE SEQUEL OF ELOISA.

(Found among the Author's Papers after his Decease.)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ELOISA.

LETTER LXXXIII.

FROM ELOISA.

I am just arrived, my dear friend, from the enjoyment of one of the most delightful sights I shall ever behold. The most prudent, the most amiable girl in the world is at length become the most deserving, the best of women. The worthy man, to whom she has given her hand, lives only to revere, to cherish, to make her happy; and I feel that inexpressible pleasure of being a witness to the happiness of my friend, and of sharing it with her; nor will you, I am convinced, partake of it less than myself; you, for whom she had always the tenderest esteem, who were dear to her almost from her infancy, and have received from her obligations which should render her yet more dear to you. Yes, we will sympathize with all her sensations; if to her they give pleasure, they shall afford us consolation; for, so great is the value of that friendship which unites us, that the happiness of either of the three is sufficient to moderate the afflictions of the other two. Let us not, however, too highly felicitate ourselves; our incomparable friend is going in some measure to forsake us. She is now entered on a new scene of life, is bound by new engagements, and become subject to new obligations. Her

heart, which once was only ours, will now find room for other affections; to which friendship must give place. We ought, therefore, my friend, to be more scrupulous hereafter in the services we impose on her zeal; we ought not only to consult the sincerity of her attachment, and the need we have of her service, but what may with propriety be required in her present situation; what may be agreeable or displeasing to her husband. We have no business to inquire what virtue demands in such a case, the laws of friendship are sufficient. He who for his own sake could expose his friend, deserves not to have one. When ours was unmarried, she was at liberty; she had nobody to call her to account for her conduct, and the uprightness of her intentions was sufficient to justify her to herself. She considered us as man and wife destined for each other; and her chaste yet susceptible heart, uniting a due regard for conduct, the most tender compassion for her culpable friend, she concealed my fault without abetting it; but at present, circumstances are changed; and she is justly accountable to the man to whom she has not only plighted her vows, but resigned her liberty. She is now intrusted not only with her own honour, but with that of her husband; and it is not enough that she is virtuous, her virtue must be respected, and her conduct approved; she must not only *deserve* the esteem of her husband, but she must *obtain* it: if he blames her, she is to blame: and although she be innocent, she is in the wrong, the moment she is suspected; for to study appearances is an indispensable part of her duty.

I cannot determine precisely how far I am right in my judgment; I leave that to you: but there is a monitor within, that tells me it is not right my cousin should continue to be my confidant; not that she should be the first to tell me so. I may be frequently mistaken in my arguments, but I am convinced I am always right in the sensations on which they

are founded; and this makes me confide more in those sensations than on the deductions of my reason.

From this consideration I have already formed a pretence to get back your letters, which, for fear of a surprise, I had put into her hands. She returned them with an oppression of heart which, with that of mine, convince me I had acted as I ought. We entered into no explanation, but our looks were sufficiently expressive; she embraced me, and burst into tears: the tender sensibility of friendship hath little occasion for the assistance of language.

With respect to the future address of your letters, I thought immediately of my little Anet, as the safest; but if this young woman be inferior in rank to my cousin, is that a reason we should less regard her virtue? Have I not reason, on the contrary, to fear my example may be more dangerous to one of less elevated sentiments: that what was only an effort of the sublimest friendship in one, may be the first step to corruption in the other; and that in abusing her gratitude, I may make virtue itself subservient to the promotion of vice? Is it not enough, alas! for me to be culpable, without seducing accomplices, and aggravating my own crime, by involving others in my guilt? Of this, therefore, no more; I have hit on another expedient, less safe indeed, but less exceptionable, as it lays nobody open to censure, nor requires a confidant. It is for you to write to me under a fictitious name: as for example, that of M. Bosquet, and to send your letters under cover addressed to Regianino, whom I shall take care to instruct. Thus Regianino himself may know nothing of our correspondence, or at most can only form suspicions, which he dares not confirm; for Lord B——, on whose favour he depends, has answered for his fidelity. In the mean time, while our correspondence is maintained by this means, I will try if it

be possible to resume the method we made use of in your voyage to the Valais, or some other that may be durable and safe.

There is something in the turn and style of your letters, that would convince me, were I even unacquainted with the state of your heart, that the life you lead at Paris is in no-wise agreeable to your inclinations. The letters of Muralt, of which they so loudly complain in France, are even less satirical and severe than yours. Like a child that is angry with its tutors, you revenge the disagreeable necessity you are under of studying the world upon your first teachers.

What I am surprized at the most, however, is that the very circumstance which usually prejudices foreigners in favour of the French, should give you disgust: I mean their polite reception of strangers, and their general turn of conversation; though, by your own confession, you have met with great civility. I have not forgot your distinction between Paris in particular, and great cities in general; but I see plainly, that, without knowing precisely what belongs to either, you censure without considering whether it be truth or slander. But, however this be, the French are my favourites, and you do not at all oblige me in reviling them. It is to the many excellent writings France has produced, that I am indebted for most of those lessons by which we have together profited. If Switzerland is emerged from its ancient barbarity, to whom is it obliged? The two greatest and most virtuous men in modern story, Catinat and Fenelon, were both Frenchmen. Henry the Fourth, the good king, whose character I admire, was a Frenchman. If France be not the country of liberty, it is properly that of *men;* a superior advantage in the eyes of a philosopher to that of licentious freedom. Hospitable protectors of the stranger, the French overlook real insult, and a man would be pelted in

London for saying half so much against the English as the French will bear at Paris. My father, who had spent the greatest part of his life in France, never speaks but with rapture of this agreeable people.

If he had spilt his blood in the service of its king, he has not been forgotten in his retirement, but is still honoured by royal beneficence. Hence I think myself in some degree interested in the glory of a nation, to which that of my father is indebted. If the people of all countries, my friend, have their good and ill qualities, you ought surely to pay the same regard to that impartiality which praises, as to that which blames them.

To be more particular with you, I will ask you why you throw away in idle visits the time you are to spend at Paris? Is not Paris a theatre wherein great talents may be displayed as well as London? And do strangers find more difficulties in the way to reputation in the former, than they do in the latter? Believe me, all the English are not like Lord B——, nor do all the French resemble those fine talkers that give you so much disgust. Try, put them to the proof, though it be only to acquire a more intimate acquaintance with their manners; and judge of people that you own speak so well by their deeds. My cousin's father says you know the constitution of the empire, and the interests of princes. My Lord B—— acknowledges also, that you are well versed in the principles of politics, and the various systems of government: and I have got it into my head, that of all countries in the world you will succeed best in that where merit is most esteemed, and that you want only to be known, to be honourably employed. As to your religion's being an obstacle, why should yours be more so than another's? Is not good sense a security against fanaticism and persecution? Does bigotry prevail more in France than in Germany? And

is there any thing that should hinder your succeeding at Paris, as M. St. Saphorin has done at Vienna? If you consider the end, the more speedy your attempts, the sooner you may promise yourself success. If you balance the means, it is certainly more reputable for a man to advance himself by his own abilities, than to be obliged for preferment to his friends. But, if you purpose a longer voyage ——ah! that *sea!*——I should like England better if it lay on this side Paris.——But, a-propos, now I talk of Paris, may I venture to take notice of another piece of affectation I have remarked in your letters? How comes it that you, who spoke to me so freely of the women of this country, say nothing about the Parisian ladies? Can those celebrated and polite females be less worth your description, than the simple and unpolished inhabitants of the mountains? Or are you apprehensive of giving me uneasiness by a picture of the most charming and seductive creatures in the universe? If this be the case, my friend, undeceive yourself, and rest assured, that the worst thing you can do for my repose is to say nothing about them; and that, however you might praise them, your silence in that respect is more suspicious than would be your highest encomiums. I shall be glad also to have some little account of the opera at Paris, of which they relate such wonders*; for after all, the musick may be bad, and yet the representation have its beauties: but if not, it will at least afford a subject for your criticism, which will offend nobody.

I know not whether it be worth while to tell you, that my

* I should have but a bad opinion of the reader's sagacity, who, knowing the character and situation of Eloisa, should think this piece of curiosity hers. It will be seen hereafter that her lover knew to whom to attribute it. If he could have been deceived in this point, he had not deserved the name of a lover.

cousin's wedding produced me two suitors: they met here a few days ago; one of them from Yverdun, hunting all the way from castle to castle, and the other from Germany in the stage-coach from Berne. The first is a kind of smart, that speaks loud, and peremptory enough to make his repartees pass for wit, among those who attend only to his manner. The other is a great bashful simpleton, whose timidity, however, is not of that amiable kind which arises from the fear of displeasing; but is owing to the embarrassment of a blockhead, who knows not what to say, and the awkwardness of a libertine, who is at a loss how to behave himself in the company of modest women. As I well know the intention of my father in regard to these two gentlemen, I took, with pleasure, the freedom he gave me, of treating them agreeably to my own humour, which, I believe, is such as will soon get the better of that which brought them hither. I hate them for their presumption, in pretending to a heart which is yours, without the least merit to dispute it with you; yet if they had ever so much, I should hate them the more: but where could they acquire it? They or any other man in the universe? No, my dear friend, rest satisfied it is impossible. Nay, were it possible that another should be possessed of equal merit, or even that another *you* should attack my heart, I should never listen to any but the first.—Be not uneasy, therefore, at these two animals, which I have with regret condescended to mention. What pleasure should I have in being able to give them both such equal portions of disgust as that they should resolve to depart both together as they came!

M. de Crousaz has lately given us a refutation of the ethic epistles of Mr. Pope, which I have read, but it did not please me. I will not take upon me to say which of these two authors is in the right, but I am conscious that the book of the former will never excite the reader to do one virtuous ac-

tion, while our zeal for every thing great and good is awakened by that of Pope. For my own part, I have no other rule by which to judge of what I read, than that of consulting the dispositions in which I rise up from my book; nor can I well conceive what sort of merit any piece has to boast, the reading of which leaves no benevolent impression behind it, nor stimulates the reader to any thing that is virtuous and good.*

Adieu, my dear friend, I would not finish my letter so soon, but am called away. I leave you with regret, for I am at present in a cheerful disposition, and I love you should partake of my happiness. The cause which now inspires it, is, that my dear mother is much better within these few days; she has, indeed, found herself so well as to be present at the wedding, and to give away her niece, or rather her other daughter. Poor Clara wept for joy to see her; and I—— but you may judge of my sensations, who, deserving her so little, hourly tremble at the thoughts of losing her. In fact, she did the honours of the table, and acquitted herself on the occasion with as good a grace as if she had been in perfect health. Nay, it seemed to me, that some remains of languor in her disposition rendered her elegant complacencies still more affecting. Never did this incomparable parent appear so good, so charming, so worthy to be revered! Do you know that she asked Mr. Orbe concerning you several times? Although she never speaks of you to me, I am not ignorant of her esteem for you; and that if ever she were consulted, your happiness and mine would be her first concern. Ah! my friend, if your heart can be truly grateful, you owe her many obligations!

* If the reader approves of this criterion, and makes use of it to judge of this work, I will not appeal from his judgment, whatever it prove.

LETTER LXXXIV.

TO ELOISA.

WELL, my Eloisa, scold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will endure every thing, but will not cease to acquaint you with my thoughts. Who should be the depository of those sentiments you have enlightened, and with whom should my heart converse, if you refuse to hear me? I give you an account of the observations I have made, and of my own opinions, not so much for your approbation, as correction; and the more liable I am to fall into error, the more punctual I should be in my application to your judgment. If I censure the manners of the people in this great city, I do not seek to be justified for taking this liberty, because I write to you in confidence; for I never say any thing of a third person, which I would not aver to his face; and all I write to you concerning the Parisians, is no more than a repetition of what I daily advance in conversation with themselves: however, they are not displeased with me, and they even join with me in many particulars. They complain of our *Muralt:* I am persuaded they see, and are convinced how much he hated them, even in his panegyrics: but I am much mistaken if, in my criticism, they do not perceive the contrary. The esteem and gratitude their generosity inspires, serves to increase my freedom: it may be serviceable to some of them; and if I may judge from their manner of receiving truth from my lips, they do not think me below their regard. When this is the case, my Eloisa, true censure is more laudable than even true praise; for that only serves to corrupt the heart of those on whom it is bestowed, and there are none so eager to obtain it as the most worthless; on the contrary, censure may be useful, and can only be endured by the most deserving. I.

sincerely own, I honour the French as the only people in the world who really love their fellow creatures, and are naturally benevolent; but, for this very reason, I am less inclined to grant them that general admiration they seem to expect, even for the faults they acknowledge. If the French had no virtues, I should not mention them; if they had no vices, they would not be men: they have too many excellent qualities for indiscriminate praise.

As to the attempts you mention, they are impracticable, because I should be obliged to use means which are not only inconvenient, but which you have also interdicted. Republican austerity is not in vogue here; they need more flexible virtues, which are more easily adapted to the interest of their friends and patrons. They respect merit, I confess; but the talents that require reputation are very different from those which lead to fortune; and, if I am so unfortunate as to possess the latter only, will Eloisa consent to become the wife of an adventurer? In England it is quite the contrary; and though their manners are perhaps less refined than in France, yet they rise to fortune by more honourable steps, because, the people having more share in the government, public esteem is of more consequence. You are not ignorant of what Lord B—— proposed to do for me, and of my intention to justify his zeal. I can have no objection to any spot on the globe, except its distance from you. O, Eloisa! if it is difficult to procure your hand, it is still more difficult to deserve so great a blessing, and yet, methinks, it is a noble task.

The account you give of your mother's health relieved me from the greatest anxiety. I perceived your distress, even before my departure, and therefore I durst not express my fears; but I thought her so changed, that I was apprehensive she would fall into some dangerous illness. Be careful of

her, because she is dear to me, because my heart reveres her, because all my hopes are centered in her goodness, and because she is the mother of my Eloisa.

As for the two suitors, I own I do not like to hear of them even in jest; but the manner in which you mention them expels my fears, and I will no longer hate these unfortunate pretenders, since you imagine they are hated by you: yet I admire your simplicity in believing yourself capable of hatred. Don't you perceive that what you take for hatred is nothing more than the impatience of insulted love? Thus anxious mourns the amorous turtle when its beloved mate is in danger of being caught. No, Eloisa; no, incomparable maid! when you are capable of hatred, I may cease to love you.

P. S.—Beset by two importunate rivals! How I pity you! for your own sake, hasten their dismission.

LETTER LXXXV.

FROM ELOISA.

I HAVE delivered into Mr. Orbe's hands a packet which he has engaged to M. Silvester, from whom you will receive it; but I caution you, my dear friend, not to open it, till you retire into your own chamber, and are quite alone. You will find in this packet a small trinket for your particular use.

It is a kind of charm which lovers gladly wear. The manner of using it is very whimsical. It must be contemplated for a quarter of an hour every morning, or until it softens the spectator into a certain degree of tenderness. It is then applied to the eyes, the mouth, and next to the heart;

and it is generally esteemed the best preservative against the noxious air of a country infected with gallantry. They even attribute an electrical quality to these talismans, which is very singular, but which acts only upon faithful lovers. They say it communicates the impression of kisses from one to the other, though at the distance of an hundred leagues. I do not pretend to warrant the success of this charm from experience; only, this I know, it is your own fault if you do not put it to the proof.

Calm your fears with regard to my two gallants or pretenders, call them which you please. They are gone: peace be with them! I shall no longer hate them, since they are out of my sight.

LETTER LXXXVI.

TO ELOISA.

And so, my Eloisa, you insist on a description of these Parisian ladies? Vain girl! but it is a homage due to your charms. Notwithstanding all your affected jealousy, your modesty, and your love, I have discovered more vanity than fear disguised under this curiosity. Be it as it will, I shall be just; I may safely speak the truth, but I should undertake the task with better spirits, if I had more to praise. Why are they not a hundred times more lovely? Would they had sufficient charms to reflect new excellence upon yours by the comparison!

You complain of my silence: good heaven! what could I have written? When you have read this letter, you will perceive why I take pleasure in speaking of your neighbours, the Valesian ladies, and why I have hitherto neglected to mention those of this country: the first continually remind

me of you, my Eloisa; but the others—read, and you will know. Few people think of the French ladies as I do, if, indeed, I am not quite singular in my opinion. Equity obliges me, therefore, to give you this hint, that you may suppose I delineate them, perhaps, not as they are in reality, but as they appear to me. Nevertheless, if I am not just in my description, I know you will censure me; and then will your injustice be greater than mine, because the fault is entirely your own.

Let us begin with their exterior qualities; the greatest number of observers proceed no farther; should I follow their examples, the women in this country would have great cause to be dissatisfied: they have an *exterior* character, as well as an *exterior* face; and, as neither one or the other is much to their advantage, it would be unjust to form our opinions of them from either. Their figure, for the most part, is only tolerable, and in general rather indifferent than perfect; yet there are exceptions. They are slender rather than well made, and therefore they gladly embrace the fashions which disguise them most; but I find, that in other countries the women are foolish enough to imitate these fashions, though contrived merely to hide defects which they have not.

Their air is easy and natural, their manner free and unaffected, because they hate all restraint; but they have a certain *disinvoltura**, which, though it is not entirely destitute of grace, they frequently carry even to a degree of absurdity. Their complexion is moderately fair, and they are commonly pale, which does not in the least add to their beauty. With regard to their necks, they are in the opposite extreme to the Valesians. Conscious of this defect, they endeavour to supply it by art; nor are they less scrupulous of borrowing an

* Freedom, ease.

artificial whiteness. Though I have never seen these objects but at a distance, they expose so much of themselves, that they leave the spectators very little room for conjecture. In this case, the ladies seem not to understand their own interest; for, if the face is but moderately handsome, the imagination heightens every concealed charm, and, according to the Gascon philosopher, there is no appetite so strong as that which was never satisfied, especially in this sense.

Their features are not very regular, but they have something in their countenance, which supplies the place of beauty, and which is sometimes much more agreeable. Their eyes are quick and sparkling, yet they are neither penetrating nor sweet: they strive to animate them by the help of *rouge*, but the expression they acquire by this means has more of anger in it than love; nature has given them sprightliness only; and though they sometimes seem to solicit tenderness, they never promise a return.*

They have acquired so great a reputation for their judgment in dress, that they are patterns to all Europe. Indeed, it is impossible to adapt such absurd fashions with more taste. They are, of all women, the least under subjection to their own modes. Fashion governs in the provinces, but the Parisians govern fashion, and every one of them is skilled in suiting it to her own advantage: the first are ignorant and servile plagiarists, who copy even orthographical errors; the latter are like authors, who imitate with judgment, and have abilities to correct the mistakes of their original.

Their apparel is more uncommon than magnificent, more elegant than rich. The rapid succession of their fashions renders them old and obsolete even from one year to another:

* Speak for yourself, my dear philosopher; others may have been more happy. A coquet only promises to every body what she should reserve but for one.

that neatness which induces them to change their dress so frequently, preserves them from much ridiculous magnificence; they do not, however, spend less money on that account, but their expences are, by this means, better conducted. They differ greatly in this particular from the Italians; instead of superb trimmings and embroidery, their clothes are always plain and new. Both sexes observe the same moderation and delicacy, which is extremely pleasing: for my part, I like to see a coat neither laced nor soiled. There is no nation in the world, except our own, where the people, especially the women, wear less gold and silver. The same kinds of stuffs are worn by people of all ranks, so that it would be difficult to distinguish a duchess from a citizen, if the first had not some marks of distinction, which the other dares not imitate. But this seems to have its inconveniencies, for whatever is the fashion at court, is immediately followed in the city; and you never see in Paris, as in other countries, a beau or belle of the last age. Nevertheless, it is not here as in most other places, where, the people of the highest rank being also the richest, the women of fashion distinguish themselves by a degree of luxury which cannot be equalled. Had the ladies of the court of France attempted this kind of distinction, they would very soon have been eclipsed by the wives of the citizens.

What then do you think was their resource? Why, they took a much more effectual method, and which required more abilities. They knew that the minds of the people were deeply impressed with a sense of bashfulness and modesty: this suggested to them fashions not to be easily imitated. They perceived that the people could not endure the thoughts of *rouge*, and that they obstinately persisted in calling it by the vulgar name of paint; and therefore they daubed their cheeks, not with paint, but with *rouge*: for, change

but the name, and it is no longer the same thing. They also perceived that a bare neck was scandalous in the eyes of the public, and for that reason they chose to enlarge the scene.—They saw—many things which my Eloisa, young as she is, will never see. In their manners they are governed exactly by the same principle.—That charming diffidence which distinguishes and adorns the sex, they despise as ignoble and vile; they animate their actions and discourse with a noble assurance; and, I am confident, they would look any modest man out of countenance. Thus they cease to be women, to avoid being confounded with the vulgar; they prefer their rank to their sex, and imitate women of pleasure, that they themselves may be above imitation.

I know not how far they may have carried *their* imitation, but I am certain they have not succeeded in their design to prevent it in others. As to *rouge*, and the fashion of displaying those charms which they ought to conceal, they have made all the progress possible. The ladies of the city had much rather renounce their natural complexion, and the charms they might borrow from the *amoroso pensier** of their lovers, than preserve the appearance of what they are: and if this example has not prevailed among the lower sort of people, it is only because they are afraid of being insulted by the populace; and thus are an infinite number of women kept within the bounds of decency, by the fear of offending the delicacy of the mob. Their masculine air, and dragoon-like deportment, is less striking, because so universal; it is conspicuous only to strangers. From one end of this metropolis to the other, there is scarce a woman whose appearance is not sufficiently bold to disconcert any man who has never been accustomed to the like in his own country: from this as-

* Amorous imagination.

tonishment proceeds that awkward confusion which they attribute to all strangers, and which increases the moment they open their lips. They have not the sweet voice of their country-women; their accent is hoarse, sharp, interrogative, imperious, jibing, and louder than that of a man. If in the tone of their voice they retain any thing feminine, it is entirely lost in the impertinence of their manner. They seem to enjoy the bashful confusion of every foreigner; but it would probably give them less pleasure, if they were acquainted with its true cause.

Whether it be, that I, in particular, am prejudiced in favour of beauty, or whether the power of beauty may not universally influence the judgment, I know not; but the handsomest women appear to me rather the most decent in their dress, and in general behave with the greatest modesty. They lose nothing by this reserve; conscious of their advantages, they know they have no need of borrowed allurements to attract our admiration. It may be also, that imprudence is more intolerably disgusting when joined with ugliness; for certainly I should much sooner be tempted to affront an impertient ugly woman, than to embrace her; whereas, by modesty she might excite even a tender compassion, which is often a harbinger of love. But though it is generally remarked, that the prettiest women are the best behaved, yet they are often so extremely affected, and are always so evidently taken up with themselves, that, in this country, there is little danger of being exposed to that temptation which M. de Muralt sometimes experienced amongst the English ladies, of telling a woman she was handsome, only for the pleasure of persuading her to think so.

Neither the natural gaiety of the French, nor their love of singularity, is the cause of this freedom of conversation and behaviour, for which these ladies are so remarkable; but it

is rather to be deduced from their manners, by which they are authorized to spend all their time in the company of men; and hence it is, that the behaviour of each sex seems to be copied from the other.

Our Swiss ladies, on the contrary, are fond of little female assemblies, in which they are extremely social and happy*; for, though they probably may not dislike the company of men, yet it is certain their presence is some constraint upon them.

In Paris it is quite the reverse; the women are never easy nor satisfied without the men. In most companies the lady of the house is seen alone amidst a circle of gentlemen; and this is so generally the case, that one cannot help wondering how such an unequal proportion of men can be every where assembled. But Paris is full of *aventuriers*, priests, and abbés, who spend their whole lives in running from house to house. Thus the women learn to think, act, and speak, from the men, whilst these, in return, imbibe a certain degree of effeminacy; and this seems the only consequence of their trifling gallantry; however, they enjoy a fulsome adoration, in which their devotees do not think it worth while to preserve even the appearance of sincerity. No matter: in the midst of her circle every woman is the sole object of attention, and that is sufficient. But if a second female enters the room, familiarity instantly gives place to ceremony, the high airs of quality are assumed, the adoration becomes divided, and each continues to be a secret constraint upon the other till the company breaks up.

The Parisian ladies are fond of public diversions; that is,

* Things are changed since that time. By many circumstances one would suppose these letters to have been written about twenty years ago; but by their style, and the manners they describe, one would conclude them to be of the last century.

they are fond of shewing themselves in public; but the great difficulty, every time they go, is to find a female companion; for decorum will not allow one lady alone to appear in the boxes, even though attended by her husband, or by any other man. It is amazing, in this very social country, how difficult it is to form these parties; out of ten that are proposed, nine generally miscarry; they are projected by the desire of being seen, and are broken by the disagreeable necessity for a sister petticoat. I should imagine it an easy matter for the ladies to abolish this ridiculous custom. What reason can there be why a woman should not be seen alone in public? Perhaps, there being no reason for it, is the very cause of its continuance. However, upon the whole, it may be prudent to preserve decency where the abolition would be attended with no great satisfaction. What great matter would there be in the privilege of appearing alone at the opera? Is it not much better to reserve this exclusive privilege for the private reception of one's friends in one's own house?

Nothing can be more certain, than that this custom of being alone amidst such a number of men, is productive of many secret connections: indeed, the world is pretty well convinced of it, since experience has proved the absurdity of that maxim which told us, that by multiplying temptations we should destroy them; so that they do not defend this fashion for its decency, but because it is most agreeable; which, by-the-by, I do not believe. How can any love exist where modesty is held in derision? and what pleasure can there be in a life which is at once deprived both of love and decency? But as the want of entertainment is the greatest evil which these slaves to dissipation have to fear, the ladies are solicitous for amusement rather than love; gallantry and attendance is all they require; and provided their danglers are assiduous,

they are very indifferent about the violence or sincerity of their passion. The words *love* and *lover* are entirely banished even from the most private intercourse of the sexes, and sunk into oblivion with the *darts* and *flames* of ancient romance.

One would imagine that the whole order of natural sensations was here reversed. A girl is to have no feelings, passions, or attachments; that privilege is reserved for the married women, and excludes no paramour except their husbands. The mother had better have twenty lovers than her daughter one. Adultery is considered as no crime, and conveys no indecency in the idea: their romances, which are universally read for instruction, are full of it; and there appears nothing shocking in its consequences, provided the lovers do not render themselves contemptible by their fidelity. O Eloisa! there are many women in this city, who have defiled their marriage-bed a hundred times, yet would presume, with the voice of impurity, to slander an union like ours, that is yet unsullied with infidelity.

It should seem, that in Paris marriage is a different institution from what it is in other parts of the world: they call it a sacrament, and yet it has not half the power of a common contract. It appears to be nothing more than a private agreement between two persons to live together, to bear the same name, and acknowledge the same children; but who, in other respects, have no authority one over the other. If at Paris a man should pretend to be offended with the ill conduct of his wife, he would be as generally despised, as if, in our country, he was to take no notice of her scandalous behaviour. Nor are the ladies on their parts less indulgent to their husbands; for I have not yet heard of an instance of their being punished for having imitated the infidelity of their wives. In

short, what other effect can be expected from an union in which their hearts were never consulted? Those who marry fortune or title, seem to be under no personal obligation.

Love, even love, hast lost its privilege, and is no less degenerated than marriage. As man and wife may be looked upon as a bachelor and a maid, who live together for the sake of enjoying more liberty; so are lovers a kind of people, who, with great indifference, meet for amusement, through custom, or out of vanity. The heart is entirely unconcerned in these attachments, in which nothing more than certain external conveniences are ever consulted: is, in short, to know each other, to dine together, now-and-then to exchange a few words, or, if possible, even less than this. An affair of gallantry lasts but a little longer than a visit, and consists chiefly in a few genteel conversations, and three or four pretty letters, filled with descriptions, maxims, philosophy, and wit. As to experimental philosophy, it does not require so much mystery; they have wisely discovered the folly of letting slip any opportunity of gratification: whether it happens to be the lover or any other man, a man is a man, and why should a lady be more scrupulous of being guilty of an infidelity to her lover than to her husband? After a certain age they may all be considered as the same kind of puppets, made up by the same fashion-monger; and consequently, the first that comes to hand is always the best.

Knowing nothing of these matters from experience, I can relate only what I have heard; and indeed, the representation is so very extraordinary, that I have but an imperfect idea of what I have been told. That which I chiefly comprehend, is, that the gallant is generally regarded as one of the family; that if the lady happens to be dissatisfied with him, he is dismissed; or if he meets with a service more to his

inclination or advantage, he takes his leave, and she engages a fresh one. There are, I have been told, some ladies so capricious as even to take up with their own husbands for a while, considering them, at least, as a kind of male creature; but this whim seldom lasts long: as soon as it is past, the good man is entirely discarded, or, if he should happen to be obstinate, why then she takes another, and keeps them both.

But I could not help objecting to the person who gave me this strange account, how it was possible, after this, to live among these discarded lovers? "Live among them! (says he;) why they are entire strangers to her ever after; and if they should, by chance, take it into their heads to renew their amours, they would have to begin anew, and would hardly be able to recollect their former acquaintance."—"I understand you, (said I;) but I have some difficulty in reconciling these extravagances. I cannot conceive, how it is possible, after such a tender union, to see each other without emotion; how the heart can avoid palpitation, even at the name of a person once beloved; why they do not tremble when they meet."—"You make me laugh (says he) with your tremblings; and so you would have our ladies continually fainting away?".

Suppress a part of this caricature representation; place my Eloisa in opposition to the rest, and remember the sincerity of my heart—I have nothing more to add.

However, I must confess, that many of these disagreeable impressions are effaced by custom. Though the dark side of their character may first catch our attention, it is no reason why we should be blind to their amiable qualities. The charms of their understanding and good humour are no small addition to their personal accomplishments. Our first repugnance overcome, frequently generates a contrary senti-

ment. It is not just to view the picture only in its worst point of sight.

The first inconveniency of great cities is, that mankind are generally disguised, and that in society they appear different from what they really are. This is particularly true in Paris with regard to the ladies, who derive from the observation of others the only existence about which they are solicitous. When you meet a lady in public; instead of seeing a Parisian, as you imagine, you behold only a phantom of the fashion; her stature, dimension, gait, shape, neck, colour, air, look, language, every thing is assumed: so that, if you were to see her in her natural state, you would not know her to be the same creature. But this universal mask is greatly to her disadvantage; for nature's substitutes are always inferior to herself: besides, it is almost impossible to conceal her entirely; in spite of us, she will now and then discover herself, and in seizing her with dexterity consists the true art of observation. This is, indeed, no difficult matter in conversing with the women of this country; for, if you take them off their grand theatre of representation, and consider them attentively, you will see them as they really are; and it is then possible that your aversion may be changed into esteem and friendship.

I had an opportunity of verifying this remark last week, on a party of pleasure, to which, along with some other strangers, I was, abruptly enough, invited by a company of ladies, probably with a design to laugh at us without constraint or interruption. The first day the project succeeded to their wish: they immediately began to dart their wit and pleasantry in showers, but as their arrows were not retorted, their quivers were soon empty. They then behaved with great decency, and finding themselves unable to bring us to *their* style, they were obliged to conform to ours. Whether they

were pleased with it or not, I am ignorant; however, the change was very agreeable to me, for I soon found that I stood a better chance to profit by the conversation of these females than from the generality of men. Their wit now appeared so great an ornament to their natural good-sense, that I changed my opinion of the sex, and could not help lamenting, that so many amiable women should want reason, only because it is their humour to reject it. I perceived also that their natural graces began insensibly to efface the artificial airs of the city: for, without design, our manner is generally influenced by the nature of our discourse: it is impossible to introduce much coquettish grimace in a rational conversation. They appeared much more handsome after they grew indifferent about it, and I perceived, that if they pleased they need only throw off their affectation. Hence, I am apt to conclude, that Paris, the pretended seat of taste, is of all places in the world that in which there is the least, since all their methods of pleasing are destructive of real beauty.

Thus we continued together four or five days, satisfied with each other, and with ourselves. Instead of satirizing Paris and its innumerable follies, we forgot both the city and its inhabitants. Our whole care was to promote the happiness of our little society. We wanted no ill-natured wit or sarcasm to excite our mirth; but our laughter, like your cousin's, was the effect of good-humour.

I had yet another reason to be confirmed in my good opinion of these females. Frequently, in the very midst of our enjoyment, a person would come in abruptly, and whisper the lady of the house. She left the room, shut herself up in her closet, and continued writing a considerable time. It was natural to suppose, that her heart was engaged in this correspondence; and of this one of the company gave a hint,

which, however, was not very graciously received: a proof, at least, that though she might possibly have no lovers, she was not without friends. But, judge of my surprise, when I was informed that these supposed Parisian suitors were no other than the unhappy peasants of the parish, who came in their distress to implore the protection of their lady; one being unjustly taxed; another enrolled in the militia, regardless of his age and family; a third groaning under a law-suit with a powerful neighbour; a fourth, ruined by a storm of hail, was going to be dragged to prison. In short, each had some petition to make, each was patiently heard; and the time we supposed to be spent in an amorous correspondence, was employed in writing letters in favour of these unhappy sufferers. It is impossible to conceive how I was astonished to find with what delight, and with how little ostentation, this young, this gay woman, performed these charitable offices of humanity. Were she even an Eloisa, thought I, she could not act otherwise! From that moment I continued to regard her with respect, and all her faults vanished.

My inquiries had no sooner taken this turn, than I began to discover a thousand advantageous particulars in the very women who before appeared so unsupportable. Indeed, all strangers are agreed, that, provided you exclude the fashionable topic, there is no country in the world whose women have more knowledge, talk more sensibly, with more judgment, and are more capable of giving advice. If from the Spanish, Italian, or German ladies, we should take the jargon of gallantry and wit, what would there remain of their conversation! and you, my Eloisa, are not ignorant how it is in general with our country-women. But if, with a French woman, a man has resolution to sacrifice his pretensions to gallantry, and to draw her out of that favourite fortress, she will then make a virtue of necessity, and, arming herself

with reason, will fight manfully in the open field. With regard to their goodness of heart, I will not instance their zeal to serve their friends; for, as with the rest of mankind, that may partly proceed from self-love. But though they generally love nobody but themselves, long habit will frequently produce in them the effects of a sincere friendship. Those who have constancy enough to support an attachment of ten years, commonly continue it to the end of their lives, and they will then love their old friends with more tenderness, at least with more fidelity, than their new lovers.

One common accusation against the women of France is, that they do every thing, and consequently more evil than good; but it may be observed in their justification, that in doing evil they are stimulated by the men, and in doing good are actuated by their own principles. This does not in anywise contradict what I said before, that the heart has no concern in the commerce between the two sexes; for the gallantry of the French has given to the women an universal power, which stands in no need of tenderness to support it. Every thing depends upon the ladies; all things are done by them, or for them; Olympus and Parnassus, glory and fortune, are equally subject to their laws. Neither books nor authors have any other value or esteem than that which the ladies are pleased to allow them. There is no appeal from their decree in matters of the nicest judgment or most trivial taste.—Poetry, criticism, history, philosophy, are all calculated for the ladies, and even the Bible itself has lately been metamorphosed into a polite romance. In public affairs, their influence arises from their natural ascendancy over their husbands, not because they are their husbands, but because they are men, and it would be monstrous for a man to refuse any thing to a lady, even though she were his wife.

Yet this authority implies neither attachment nor esteem,

but merely politeness and compliance with custom; for it is as essential to French gallantry to despise the women as to oblige them; and this contempt is taken as a proof that a man has seen enough of the world to know the sex: Whoever treats them with respect is deemed a novice, a knight-errant, one who has known woman only in romances. They judge so equitably of themselves, that to honour them is to forfeit their esteem; so that the principal requisite in a man of gallantry is superlative impertinence.

Let the ladies of this country pretend what they will, they are, in spite of themselves, extremely good-natured. All men who are burdened with a multiplicity of affairs are difficult of access, and without commiseration; and in Paris, the centre of business of one of the most considerable nations in Europe, the men of consequence are particularly obdurate: those, therefore, who have any thing to ask, naturally apply to the ladies, whose ears are never shut against the unhappy: they console and serve them. In the midst of all their frivolous dissipation, they do not scruple to steal a few moments from their pleasures, and devote them to acts of benevolence; and though there may be some women mean enough to make an infamous traffic of their services, there are hundreds, on the contrary, who are daily employed in charitably assisting the distressed. However it must be confessed, that they are sometimes so indiscreet as to ruin an unfortunate man they happen not to know, in order to serve their own friend. But how is it possible to know every body in so extensive a country? or how can more be expected from good-nature destitute of real virtue, whose sublimest effort is not so much to do good, as to avoid evil? After all, it must be allowed that their inclinations are not naturally bad; that they do a great deal of good; that they do it from their hearts; that they alone preserve the remains of hu-

manity, which is still to be found in Paris ; and that without them we should see the men avaricious and insatiable, like wolves devouring each other.

I should have remained ignorant of all this, if I had not consulted their comedies and romances, whose authors are, perhaps, too apt to stumble upon those foibles from which they themselves are not exempt, rather than the virtues they happen not to possess ; who, instead of encouraging their readers by praising their real virtues, amuse themselves with painting imaginary characters too perfect for imitation.

Romances are, perhaps, the last vehicle of instruction that can be administered to a corrupt people. It were to be wished that none were suffered to prepare this medicine, but men of honest principles and true sensibility ; authors, whose writings should be a picture of their own hearts ; who, instead of fixing virtue in the heavens, beyond the reach of our nature, would, by smoothing the way, insensibly tempt us out of the gulf of vice.

But to return to the Parisian ladies, concerning whom I do not by any means agree in the common opinion. They are universally allowed to have the most enchanting address, the most seducing manner ; to be the most refined coquets ; to possess the most sublime gallantry, and the art of pleasing to a superlative degree. For my part, I think their address shocking, their coquettish airs disgusting, and their manner extremely immodest. I should imagine that the heart would shrink back at all their advances : and I can never be persuaded, that they can for a single moment talk of love, without showing themselves incapable of either feeling or inspiring that tender passion.

On the other hand, we find them represented as frivolous, artful, false, thoughtless, inconstant, talking well, but without reflection or sentiment, and evaporating all their

merit in idle chit-chat. But to me all this appears to be as external as their *rouge*, or their hoop petticoats. There are a kind of fashionable vices which are supposed necessary at Paris, but which are not incompatible with sense, reason, humanity, and good-nature. These ladies are, in many cases, more discreet, and less given to tattling than those of any other country. They are better instructed, and the things they are taught have stronger effect upon their judgment. In short, if I dislike them for having disfigured the proper characteristics of their sex, I esteem them for those virtues in which they resemble us; and my opinion is, that they are better calculated to be men of merit, than amiable women.

One word more, and I have done—If Eloisa had never been, if my heart had been capable of any other attachment than that for which it was created, I should never have taken a wife or mistress in Paris; but should gladly have chosen a friend, and such a treasure might possibly have consoled me for the want of the others.*

LETTER LXXXVII.

TO ELOISA.

Since the receipt of your letter, I have been daily with Mr. Silvester, to see after the packet you mentioned; but my impatience has been seven times disappointed. At length, however, on the eighth time of going, I received it; and it

* I shall not give my opinion of this letter; but I doubt much, whether a judgment which allows them the qualities they despise, and denies them those which they value, will be pleasing to the French ladies.

was no sooner put into my hands, than, without staying to pay the postage, even without asking what it came to, or speaking a word to any body, I ran with it out of doors; and as if I had been out of my senses, passed by the door of my lodgings, though it stood open before me, and traversed a number of streets that I knew nothing of, till in about half an hour I found myself at the farther end of Paris. I was then obliged to take a hackney-coach, in order to get the more speedily home, which is the first time I have made use of those conveniences in a morning; indeed, it is with regret I use them even in an afternoon, to pay some distant visits; for my legs are good, and I should be sorry that any improvement in my circumstances should make me neglect the use of them.

When I was seated in the coach, I was a good deal perplexed with my packet, as you had laid your injunctions on me to open it no where but at home. Besides, I was unwilling to be subject to any interruption while I was indulging myself in that exquisite satisfaction I find in every thing that comes from you. I held it, therefore, with an impatience and curiosity which I could scarce contain: endeavouring to discover its contents through the covers, by pressing it every way with my hands; from the continual motions of which, you would have thought the packet contained fire, and burned the ends of my fingers. Not but that from its size, weight, and the contents of your former letter, I had some suspicion; but then, how could I conceive you to have found either the opportunity or the artist? But what I then could not conceive is one of the miracles of all-mighty love; the more it surpasses my conception, the more it enchants my heart, and one of the greatest pleasures it give me arises from my ignorance of the manner in which you could effect it.

Arrived at length at my lodgings, I flew to my chamber, locked the door, threw myself, out of breath, into a chair, and with a trembling hand broke open the seal. It was then, Eloisa, I felt the first effect of this powerful talisman. The palpitations of my heart increased at every paper I unfolded, till coming to the last, I was forced to stop and take breath a moment before I could open it. It is open—my suggestions are true—it is so—it is the portrait of Eloisa.—O, my love! your divine image is before me! I gaze with rapture on your charms! my lips, my heart, pay them the first homage, my knees bend——Again, my eyes are ravished with your heavenly beauties. How immediate, how powerful is their magical effect! No, Eloisa, it requires not, as you pretend, a quarter of an hour to make itself perceived! a minute, an instant suffices, to draw from my breast a thousand ardent sighs, and to recall, with thy image, the remembrance of my past happiness. Ah! why is the rapture of having such a treasure in possession, allayed with so much bitterness? How lively is the representation it gives me of days that are no more! I gaze on the portrait, I think I see Eloisa, and enjoy in imagination those delightful moments whose remembrance embitters my present hours; and which Heaven in its anger bestowed on me only to take them away. Alas! the next instant undeceives me; the pangs of absence throb with increased violence, after the agreeable delusion is vanished, and I am in the state of those miserable wretches, whose tortures are remitted only to render them the more cruel. Heavens! what flames have not my eager eyes darted on this unexpected object? how has the sight of it roused in me those impetuous emotions which used to be effected by your presence? O, my Eloisa! were it possible for this talisman to affect your senses with the phrensy and illusion of mine—But why is it not possible? why may not those impressions

which the mind darts forth with such rapidity, reach as far as Eloisa? Ah, my charming friend, wherever you are, or however you are employed, at the time I am writing, at the time your portrait receives the same homage I pay to the idol of my soul, do you not perceive your charming face bedewed with tears? Do you not sympathize with me in love and sorrow? Do you not feel the ardour of a lover's kisses on your lips, your cheeks, your breast? Do you not glow all over with the flame imparted from my burning lips?—Ha! what's that—Somebody knocks—I will hide my treasure, an impertinent breaks in upon me—accursed be the cruel intruder, for interrupting me in transports so delightful! may he never be capable of love—or may he be doomed to pine in absence, like me!

LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO MRS. ORBE.

It is to you, dear cousin, I am to give an account of the French opera: for although you have not mentioned in your own letters, and Eloisa has kept your secret in hers, I am not at a loss to whom to attribute that piece of curiosity. I have been once to the opera to satisfy myself, and twice to oblige you, but am in hopes this letter will be my excuse for going no more. If you command me, indeed, I can bear it again; I can suffer, I can sleep there, for your service; but to remain awake and attentive is absolutely impossible.

But, before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will give you an account of what they say of it here; the opinion of the connoisseurs may perhaps rectify mine, where I happen to be mistaken. The French opera passes at Paris for the most pompous, the most delightful, the most won-

derful entertainment that was ever effected by the united efforts of the human genius. It is said to be the most superb monument of the magnificence of Louis the Fourteenth. In fact, every one is not so much at liberty as you imagine, to give his opinion on so grave a subject. Every thing may be made a point of dispute here, except musick and the opera: but with respect to these, it may be dangerous not to dissemble one's thoughts, as the French musick is supported by an inquisition no less arbitrary than severe. Indeed, the first lesson which strangers are taught, is, that foreigners universally allow that nothing in the whole world is so fine as the Opera at Paris. The truth is, discreet people are silent upon this topic, because they dare not laugh except in private.

It must be allowed, however, that they represent at the opera, at a vast expence, not only all the wonderful things of nature, but many others still more wonderful, and which nature never produced. For my part, I cannot help thinking Mr. Pope meant this theatre, where he said, one might see gods, devils, monsters, kings, shepherds, and fairies, all mixed together in one scene of confusion.

This assemblage, so magnificent and well conducted, is regarded by the spectators as if all the things and characters exhibited were real. On seeing the representation of a heathen temple, they are seized with a profound reverence; and if the goddess be tolerably pretty, half the men in the pit are immediately pagans.

Here the audience are not so nice as at the French comedy. These very spectators, who could not there consider the player as the character he represented, cannot at the opera consider him any otherwise. It seems as if they were shocked at a rational deception, and could give into nothing but what was grossly absurd: or perhaps they can more easily con-

ceive players to be gods than heroes. Jupiter being of another nature, people may think of him as they please; but Cato was a man; and how few men are there, who, to judge for themselves, have any reason to think such a man as Cato ever existed?

This opera is not composed, therefore, as in other places, of a company of mercenaries, hired to furnish out an entertainment for the public. It is true, they are paid by the public, and it is their business to attend the opera: but the nature of it is quite changed by its becoming a royal academy of musick; a sort of sovereign tribunal that judges without appeal in its own cause, and is not very remarkable for justice and integrity. Thus, you see how much, in some countries, the essence of things depends on mere words, and how a respectable title may do honour to that which least deserves it.

The members of this illustrious academy are not degraded by their profession: in revenge, however, they are excommunicated, which is directly contrary to the custom of all other countries: but, perhaps, having had their choice, they had rather live honourably and be damned, than, as plebeians, go vulgarly to heaven. I have seen a modern chevalier on the French theatre, as proud of the profession of a player, as the unfortunate Laberius was formerly mortified at it, although the latter was forced into it by the commands of Cæsar, and recited only his own works*. But then our

* Obliged by the tyrant to appear on the stage, he lamented his disgrace in some very affecting verses, which justly irritated every honest mind against Cæsar. *After having lived* (said he) *sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning, a Roman knight, but shall return to it this evening an infamous stage-player. Alas! I have lived a day too long. O fortune! if it was my lot to be thus once disgraced, why did you not force me hither while youth and*

degraded ancient could not afterwards take his place in the Circus among the Roman knights; whilst the modern one found his every day at the French comedy, among the first nobility in the kingdom. And I will venture to say, never did they talk at Rome with so much respect of the majesty of the Roman people, as they do at Paris of the majesty of the opera.

This is what I have gathered chiefly from conversation about this splendid entertainment: I will now relate to you what I have seen of it myself.

Imagine to yourself the inside of a large box, about fifteen feet wide, and long in proportion: the box is the stage; on each side are placed skreens, at different distances, on which the objects of the scene are coarsely painted. Beyond this is a great curtain, bedaubed in the same manner, which extends from one side to the other, and is generally cut through, to represent caves in the earth, and openings in the heavens, as the perspective requires. So that, if any person, in walking beyond the scenes, should happen to brush against the curtain, he might cause an earthquake so violent as to shake our sides with laughing. The skies are represented by

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vigour had left me at least an agreeable person: but now, what a wretched object do I present to the insults of the people of Rome? A feeble voice, a weak body, a mere corpse, an animated skeleton which has nothing left of me but my name. The entire prologue which he spoke on this occasion; the injustice done him by Cæsar, who was piqued at the noble freedom with which he avenged his offended honour; the affront he received at the Circus; the meanness of Cicero in upbraiding him with the ingenious and satirical reply of Laberius; are all preserved by Aulus Gellius, and compose, in my opinion, the most curious and interesting piece in his whole collection; which is, for the most part, a very insipid one.

a parcel of blueish rags, hung up with lines and poles, like wet linen at the washer-woman's. The sun, for he is represented here sometimes, is a large candle in a lantern. The chariots of the gods and goddesses are made of four bits of wood, nailed together in the form of a square, and hung up by a strong cord, like a swing: across the middle is fastened a board, on which the deity sits a-straddle; and in the front of it hangs a piece of coarse canvas, bedaubed with paint to represent the clouds that attend on this magnificent car. The bottom of this machine is illuminated by two or three stinking, unsnuffed candles, which, as often as the celestial personage bustles about and shakes his swing, smoke him deliciously with incense worthy such a divinity.

As these chariots are the most considerable machines of the opera, you may judge by them of the rest. A troubled sea is made of long rollers covered with canvas or blue paper, laid parallel, and turned by the dirty understrappers of the theatre. Their thunder is a heavy cart, which rumbles over the floor, and is not the least affecting instrument of their agreeable musick. The flashes of lightning are made by throwing powdered resin into the flame of a link; and the falling thunderbolt is a cracker at the end of a squib.

The stage is provided with little square trap-doors; which, opening on occasion, give notice that the infernal demons are coming out of the cellar. And when they are to be carried up into the air, they substitute dextrously in their room little devils of brown canvas stuffed with straw, or sometimes real chimney-sweepers, who are drawn up by ropes, and ride triumphant through the air, till they majestically enter the clouds, and are lost among the dirty rags I mentioned.—But what is really tragical is, that when the tackle is not well managed, or the ropes happen to break, down come infernal spirits and immortal gods together, and break

their limbs, and sometimes their necks. To all this I shall add their monsters, which certainly make some scenes very pathetic, such as their dragons, lizards, tortoises, crocodiles, and great toads, all which stalk or crawl about the stage with a threatening air, and put one in mind of the temptation of St. Antony; every one of these figures being animated by a looby of a Savoyard, who has not even sense enough to play the brute.

Thus you see, cousin, in what consists, in a great degree, the splendid furniture of the opera; at least, thus much I could observe from the pit, with the help of my glass; for you must not imagine these expedients are much hid, or produce any great illusion: I only tell you here what I saw, and what every other unprejudiced spectator might have seen as well as myself. I was told, nevertheless, that a prodigious quantity of machinery is employed to effect all these motions, and was several times offered a sight of it; but I was never curious to see in what manner extraordinary efforts were made to produce insignificant effects.

The number of people engaged in the service of the opera is inconceivable. The orchestra and chorus together consists of near an hundred persons: there is a multitude of dancers, every part being doubly and trebly supplied*: that is to say, there are always one or two inferior actors ready to take the place of the principal, and who are paid for doing nothing, till the principal is pleased to do nothing in his turn, and which is seldom long before it happens. After a few representations, their chief actors, who are personages of great consequence, honour the public no more with their presence in that piece, but give up their parts to their substitutes, or

* They know nothing of this in Italy; the public would not suffer it, and thus the entertainment is subject to less expence: it would cost too much to be thus ill-served.

to the substitutes of those substitutes. They receive always the same money at the door; but the spectator does not always meet with the same entertainment. Every one takes a ticket, as he does in the lottery, without knowing what will be his prize; but, be what it will, nobody dares complain; for you are to know, that the honourable members of this academy owe the public no manner of respect: it is the public which owes it to them.

I will say nothing to you of their musick, because you are acquainted with it. But you can have no idea of the frightful cries and hideous bellowings with which the theatre resounds during the representation. The actresses throwing themselves into convulsions as it were, rend their lungs with squeaking: in the mean time, with their fists clenched against their stomachs, their heads thrown back, their faces red, their veins swelled, and their breasts heaving, one knows not which is most disagreeably affected, the eye or the ear. Their actions make those suffer as much who see them, as their singing does those who hear them; and yet what is inconceivable is, that these howlings are almost the only thing the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands, one would imagine them a parcel of deaf people, delighted to be able to hear the voice now and then strained to the highest pitch, and that they strove to encourage the actors to repeat their efforts. For my part, I am persuaded that they applaud the squeaking of an actress at the opera, for the same reason as they do the tricks of a tumbler or posture-master at the fair: it is displeasing and painful to see them; one is in pain while they last; but we are so glad to see all pass off without any accident, that we willingly give them applause.

Think how well this manner of singing is adapted to express all the soft and tender writings of Quinault. Imagine the Muses, Loves, and Graces, imagine Venus herself, expres-

sing her sentiments in this delicate manner, and judge of the effects. As to their devils, let us leave their musick to something infernal enough to suit it. As also that of their magicians, conjurers, and witches; all which, however, meets with the greatest applause, at the French opera.

To these ravishing sounds, as harmonious as sweet, we may very deservedly join those of the orchestra. Conceive to yourself a continual clashing of jarring instruments, attended with the drawling and perpetual groans of the bass, a noise the most doleful and insupportable that I ever heard in my life, and which I could never bear a quarter of an hour together, without being seized with a violent head-ache. All this forms a species of psalmody, which has commonly neither time nor tune. But when, by accident, they hit on an air a little lively, the feet of the audience are immediately in motion, and the whole house thunders with their clattering. The pit in particular, with much pains and a great noise, always imitate a certain performer in the orchestra*. Delighted to perceive for a moment that cadence which they so seldom feel, they strain their ears, voice, hands, feet, and, in short, their whole body, to keep that time which is every moment ready to escape them. Instead of this, the Italians and Germans, who are more easily affected with the measures of their musick, pursue them without any effort, and have never any occasion to beat time: at least, Regianino has often told me, that at the opera in Italy, where the musick is so affecting and lively, you will never see, or hear, in the orchestra, or among the spectators, the least motion of either hands or feet. But in this country every thing serves to prove the dulness of their musical organs; their voices are harsh and unpleasing, their tones affected and drawling, and

* *Le Bucheron.*

their transitions hard and dissonant: there is no cadence nor melody in their songs; their martial instruments, the fifes of the infantry, the trumpets of their cavalry, their horns, their hautboys, the ballad-singers in the streets, and the fidlers in the public-houses, all have something so horribly grating as to shock the most indelicate ear*. All talents are not bestowed on the same men, and the French in general are of all the people in Europe those of the least aptitude for musick. Lord B—— pretends that the English have as little; but the difference is, that they know it, and care nothing about the matter, whereas the French give up a thousand just pretensions, and will submit to be censured in any other point whatever, sooner than admit they are not the first musicians in the world. There are even people at Paris who look upon the cultivation of musick as the concern of the state, perhaps because the improvement of Timotheus's lyre was so at Sparta. However this be, the opera here may, for aught I know, be a good political institution, in that it pleases persons of taste no better. But to return to my description.

The *ballets*, which are the most brilliant parts of the opera, considered of themselves, afford a pleasing entertainment, as they are magnificent and truly theatrical; but, as they enter into the composition of the piece, it is in that light we must consider them.

You remember the operas of Quinault; you know in what manner the diversions are there introduced; it is much the same, or rather worse, with his successors. In every act, the action of the piece is stopped short, just at the most in-

* The light airs of the French musick have not been unaptly compared to a cow's courant, or the hobblings of a fat goose attempting to fly.

teresting period, by an interlude which is represented before the actors, who are seated on the stage, while the audience in the pit are kept standing. From these interruptions it frequently happens, that the characters of the piece are quite forgotten, and always that the spectators are kept looking at actors, that are looking at something else. The fashion of these interludes is very simple. If the prince is in a good humour, it partakes of the gaiety of his disposition, and is a dance: if he is displeased, it is contrived, in order to bring him to temper again, and it is a dance. I know not whether it be the fashion at court to make a ball for the entertainment of the king when he is out of humour; but this I know, with respect to our opera-kings, that one cannot sufficiently admire their stoical firmness and philosophy, in sitting so tranquil to see comic dances and attend to songs, while the fate of their kingdoms, crowns, and lives, is sometimes determined behind the scenes. But they have, besides, many other occasions for the introduction of dances; the most solemn actions of human life are here performed in a dance. The parsons dance, the soldiers dance, the gods dance, the devils dance, the mourners dance at their funerals, and, in short, all their characters dance on all occasions.

Dancing is thus the fourth of the fine arts employed in the constitution of the lyric drama: the other three are arts of imitation; but what is imitated in dancing? nothing.—It is therefore foreign to the purpose; for what business is there for minuets or rigadoons in a tragedy? Nay, I will venture to say, dancing would be equally absurd in such compositions, though something was imitated by it: for of all the dramatic unities, the most indispensable is that of language or expression; and an opera made up partly of singing, partly of dancing, is even more ridiculous than that in which they sing half French half Italian.

Not content to introduce dancing as an essential part of the composition, they even attempt to make it the principal; having operas which they call *ballets*, and which so badly answer their title, that dancing is no less out of character in them than in all the rest. Most of these ballets consist of as many different subjects as acts; which subjects are connected together by a certain metaphysical relation, of which the spectator would never form the least suspicion or conjecture, if the author did not take care to advise him of it in the prologue. The seasons, ages, senses, elements, are the subject of a dance; but I should be glad to know what propriety there is in all this, or what ideas can by this means be conveyed to the mind of the spectator? Some of them again are purely allegorical, as the *carnival*, the *folly*, and are the most intolerable of all; because, with a good deal of wit and finesse, they contain neither sentiment, description, plot, business, nor any thing that can either interest the audience, set off the musick to advantage, flatter the passions, or heighten the illusion. In these pretended ballets the action of the piece is performed in singing, the dancers continually finding occasion to break in upon the singers, though without meaning or design.

The result of all this, however, is, that these ballets being less interesting than their tragedies, these interruptions are little remarked. Were the piece itself more affecting, the spectator would be more offended; but the one defect serves to hide the other, and, in order to prevent the spectators being tired with the dancing, the authors artfully contrive it so that they may be more heartily tired with the piece itself.

This would lead me insensibly to make some inquiries into the true composition of the lyric drama, but these would be too prolix to be comprised in this letter; I have therefore written a little dissertation on that subject which you will

find inclosed, and may communicate to Regianino. I shal only add, with respect to the French opera, that the greatest fault I observed in it, is a false taste for magnificence; whence they attempt to represent the marvellous, which, being only the object of imagination, is introduced with as much propriety in an epic poem, as it is ridiculously attempted on the stage. I should hardly have believed, had not I seen it, that there could be found artists weak enough to attempt an imitation of the chariot of the sun, or spectators so childish as to go to see it. Bruyere could not conceive how so fine a sight as the Opera could be tiresome. For my part, who am no Bruyere, I can conceive it very well; and will maintain, that to every man who has a true taste for the fine arts, the French musick, their dancing, and the marvellous of their scenery put together, compose the most tiresome representation in the world. After all, perhaps the French do not deserve a more perfect entertainment, especially with respect to the performance: not because they want ability to judge of what is good, but because the bad pleases them better. For, as they had rather censure than applaud, the pleasure of criticizing compensates for every defect, and they had rather laugh after they get home, than be pleased with the piece during the representation.

LETTER LXXXIX.

FROM ELOISA.

Yes, I see it well: Eloisa is still happy in your love; the same fire that once sparkled in your eyes glows throughout your last letter, and kindles all the ardour of mine. Yes, my friend, in vain doth fortune separate us; let our hearts press forwards to each other; let us preserve by such a communi-

cation their natural warmth against the chilling coldness of absence and despair ; and let every thing that tends to loosen the ties of our affections, serve only to draw them closer, and bind them more fast.

You will smile at my simplicity when I tell you, that since the receipt of your letter I have experienced something of those charming effects therein mentioned, and that the jest of the talisman, although purely my own invention, is turned upon myself, and become serious. I am seized a hundred times a day, when alone, with a fit of trembling, as if you were before me. I imagine you are gazing on my portrait, and am foolish enough to feel, in conceit, the warmth of those embraces, the impression of those kisses, you bestow on it. Sweet illusion ! charming effects of fancy ! the last resource of the unhappy. Oh ! if it be possible, be to us a pleasing reality ! you are yet something to those who are deprived of real happiness.

As to the manner in which I obtained the portrait, it was indeed the contrivance of love ; but, believe me, if mine could work miracles, it would not have made choice of this. I will let you into the secret. We had here, some time ago, a miniature-painter, on his return from Italy : he brought letters from Lord B——, who perhaps had some view in sending him. Mr. Orbe embraced this opportunity to have a portrait of my cousin ; I was desirous of one also. In return, she and my mother would each have one of me, of which the painter at my request took secretly a second copy. Without troubling myself about the original, I chose of the three that which I thought the most perfect likeness, with a design to send it you. I made but little scruple, I own, of this piece of deceit ; for, as to the likeness of the portrait, a little more or less can make no great difference with my mother and cousin ; but the homage you might pay to any

other resemblance than mine would be a kind of infidelity, by so much the more dangerous, as my picture might be handsomer than me; and I would not, on any account, that you should nourish a passion for charms I do not possess. With respect to the drapery, I could have liked to have been not so negligently dressed; but I was not heard, and my father himself insisted on the portrait's being finished as it is, except the head-dress. However, nothing of the habit was taken from mine, the painter having dressed the picture as he thought proper, and ornamented my person with the works of his own imagination.

LETTER XC.

TO ELOISA.

I MUST talk to you still, my dear Eloisa, of your portrait, no longer, however, in that rapturous strain which the first sight of it inspired; and with which yourself were so much affected; but, on the contrary, with the regret of a man deceived by false hopes, and whom nothing can recompense for what he has lost. Your portrait, like yourself, is both graceful and beautiful; it is also a tolerable likeness, and is painted by the hand of a master; but to be satisfied with it I ought never to have known you.

The first fault I find in it is, that it resembles you, and yet it is not yourself; that it has your likeness, and is insensible. In vain the painter thought to copy your features; where is that sweetness of sentiment that enlivens them, and without which, regular and beautiful as they are, they are nothing? Your heart, Eloisa, no painting can imitate. This defect, I own, should be attributed to the imperfection of the art; but it is the fault of the artist not to have been

exact in every thing that depended on himself. He has, for instance, brought the hair too forward on the temples, which gives the forehead a less agreeable and delicate air. He has also forgotten two or three little veins, seen through the transparent skin in winding branches of purple, resembling those of the iris we once stood admiring in the gardens of *Clarens*. The colouring of the cheeks is also too near the eyes, and is not softened into that glowing blush of the rose, toward the lower part of the face, which distinguishes the lovely original. One would take it for an artificial *rouge*, plastered on like the carmine of the French ladies. Nor is this defect a small one, as it makes the eyes appear less soft, and its looks more bold.

But, pray, what has he done with those dimples wherein the little Cupids lurk at the corners of your mouth, and which in my fortunate days I used to stifle with kisses? He has not given half their beauty to these charming lips. He has not given the mouth that agreeable serious turn, which, changing in an instant into a smile, ravishes the heart with inconceivable enchantment, and inspires it with an instantaneous rapture which no words can express. It is true, your portrait cannot pass from the serious to a smile. This is, alas! the very thing of which I complain. To paint all your charms, you should be drawn every instant of your life.

But to pass over the injustice the painter has done you, in overlooking your beauties, he has done you more in having omitted your defects. He has left out that almost imperceptible mole under your right eye, as well as that on the right side of your neck. He has not—Heavens! was the man a statue? he has forgot the little scar under your lip; he has made your hair and eye-brows of the same colour; which they are not. Your eye-brows are more upon the chesnut, and your hair rather of the ash colour.

Bionda testa, occhi azurri, e bruno ciglio.

Light hair, blue eyes, and eye-brows lovely brown.

He has made the lower part of the face exactly oval; not observing the small hollow between your cheeks and chin, which makes their outlines less regular and more agreeable. These are the most palpable defects; but he has omitted several others, for which I owe him no good will: for I am not only in love with your beauties, but with Eloisa herself, just as she is. If you would not be obliged for any charm to the pencil, I would not have you lose by it the smallest defect; my heart can never be affected by charms that are not your own.

As to the drapery, I shall take the more notice of it, as whether in a dishabille or otherwise, I have always seen you dressed with more taste than you are in the portrait: the head-dress is too large: you will say it is composed only of flowers: that is true; but there are too many. Do not you remember the ball, at which you were dressed like a country-girl, and your cousin told me I danced like a philosopher? You then had no other head-dress than your long tresses, turned up and fastened at top with a golden bodkin, in the manner of the villagers of Bern. No, the sun glittering in all its radiance displays not half that lustre with which you then engaged the eyes and hearts of the beholders; and there is no one who saw you that day, that can ever forget you during his whole life. It is thus, my Eloisa, your head ought to have been dressed. It is your charming hair that should adorn your face, and not those spreading roses. Tell my cousin, for I discover her choice and direction, that the flowers with which she has thus covered and profaned your tresses, are in no better taste than those she gathers in *Adonis*.

One might overlook them, did they serve as an ornament to beauty, but I cannot permit them to hide it.

With respect to the bust, it is singular that a lover should be more nice in this particular than a father; but, to say the truth, I think you are too carelessly dressed. The portrait of Eloisa should be modest as herself. These hidden charms should be sacred to love. You say the painter drew them from his imagination. I believe it; indeed, I believe it. Had he caught the least glimpse of thine, his eyes would have gazed on them for ever, but his hand would not have attempted to paint them; why was it necessary the rash artist should form them in imagination? this was not only an offence against decency, but I will maintain it also to be want of taste.

Yes, your countenance is too modest to support the disorder of your breast; it is plain that one of these objects ought to hinder the other from being seen: it is the privilege of love alone to see both together, and when its glowing hand uncovers the charms that modesty conceals, the sweet confusion of your eyes shows that you forget not that you expose them.

Such are the criticisms that a continual attention has occasioned me to make on your portrait; in consequence of which I have formed a design to alter it, agreeably to my own taste. I have communicated my intentions to an able master, and from what he has already done, I hope to see you soon more like yourself. For fear of spoiling the picture, however, we try our alterations first on a copy which I have made him take; and make them in the original only when we are quite sure of their effect. Although I design but indifferently, my artist cannot help admiring the subtlety of my observations; but he does not know that love, who dictates them, is a greater master than he. I seem to him

also sometimes very whimsical: he tells me I am the first lover that ever chose to hide objects which others think cannot be too much exposed; and when I answer him, it is in order to have a full view of you, that I dress you up with so much care, he stares at me, as if he thought me a fool. Ah! my Eloisa, how much more affecting would be your portrait, if I could but find out the means to display in it your mind as well as your face; to paint at once your modesty and your charms! what would not the latter gain by such an amendment! at present, those only are seen which the painter imagined, and the ravished spectator thinks them such as they are. I know not what secret enchantment is about your person, but every thing that touches you seems to partake of its virtues: one need only perceive the hem of your garment to revere the wearer of it. One perceives in your dress how the veil of the Graces affords a covering to the model of beauty; and the taste of your modest apparel displays to the mind all those charms it conceals.

LETTER XCI.

TO ELOISA.

Oh! Eloisa! you whom once I could call mine, though now I profane your virtuous name! my pen drops from my trembling hand; I blot the paper with my tears; I can hardly trace the first words of a letter which ought never to be written: alas! I can neither speak nor be silent. Come, thou dear and respectable image of my love, come purify and strengthen a heart depressed with shame, and torn to pieces by remorse. Support my resolution that fails me, and give

my contrition the power to avow the involuntary crime into which the absence of Eloisa has plunged me.

Oh! Eloisa! how contemptible will you think me! and yet you cannot hold me in greater contempt than I do myself. Abject as I may seem in your eyes, I am yet a hundred times more so in my own: for, in reflecting on my own demerits, what mortifies me most, is to see, to feel you still in my heart, in a place henceforward so little worthy of your image; and to think that the remembrance of the truest pleasures of love could not prevent me from falling into a snare that had no lure, from being led into a crime that presented no temptation.

Such is the excess of my confusion, that I am afraid, even in recurring to your clemency, lest the perusal of the lines in which I confess my guilt should offend you. Let your purity and chastity forgive me a recital which should have been spared your modesty, were it not the means to expiate, in some degree, my infidelity. I know I am unworthy of your goodness; I am a mean, despicable wretch, but I will not be an hypocrite, and deceive you, for I had rather you should deprive me of your love, and even life itself, than to impose on Eloisa for a moment. Lest I should be tempted, therefore, to seek excuses to palliate my crime, which will only render me the more criminal, I will confine myself to an exact relation of what has happened to me—a relation that shall be as sincere as my repentance, which is all I shall say in my defence.

I had commenced acquaintance with some officers in the guards, and other young people among my countrymen, in whom I found a good innate disposition, which I was sorry to see spoiled by the imitation of I know not what false airs, which nature never designed for them. They laughed at me

in their turn, for preserving in Paris the simplicity of our ancient Helvetian manners; and, construing my maxims and behaviour into an indirect censure of theirs, resolved to make me a convert to their own practices, at all hazards. After several attempts which did not succeed, they made another too well concerted to fail of success. Yesterday morning they came to me, with a proposal to go with them to the lady of a certain colonel they mentioned; who, from the report, they were pleased to say, of my good sense, had a mind to be acquainted with me.—Fool enough to give into this idle story, I represented to them the propriety of first making her a visit: but they laughed at my punctilios, telling me the frankness of a Swiss did not at all agree with such formality, and that so much ceremony would only serve to give her a bad opinion of me. At nine o'clock then in the evening we waited on the lady. She came out to receive us on the stair-case, through an excess of civility which I had never seen practised before. Having entered the apartment, I observed a servant lighting up pieces of old wax candles over the chimney, and over all an air of preparation which did not at all please me. The mistress of the house appeared handsome, though a little past her prime: there were also several other women with her much about the same age and figure; their dress, which was rich enough, had more finery in it than taste; but I have already observed to you that this is not a sure sign by which to judge of the condition of the women of this country.—The first compliments were made as usual, custom teaching one to cut them short, or to turn them into pleasantry, before they grow tiresome. Something unusual, however, appeared, as soon as our discourse became general and serious. I thought the ladies seemed to wear an air of restraint, as if it were not familiar to them; and now for the first time since I have been at Paris, I saw women at

a loss to support a rational conversation. To find an easy topic, they brought up at length their family affairs, and as I knew none of them, I had little share in the conversation. Never before did I hear so much talk of the colonel, and the colonel; which not a little surprized me, in the country where it is the custom to distinguish people rather by their names than by their profession, and in which almost every man of rank in the army has besides some other title of distinction.

The affectation of dignity soon gave way to a behaviour more natural to them: they began to talk low, and, running insensibly into an air of indecent familiarity, they laughed and whispered every time they looked at me, while the lady of the house asked me the situation of my heart, with a certain boldness of manner not at all adapted to make a conquest of it. The table was spread, and that freedom which seems to make no distinction of persons, but generally puts every one without design in the proper place, fully convinced me what sort of company I was in. But it was too late to recede: putting confidence, therefore, in my aversion, I determined to apply that evening to observation, and to employ in the study of that order of women, the only opportunity I might ever have. Little, however, was the fruit of my attention: I found them so insensible to their present situation, so void of apprehensions for the future, and, excepting the tricks of their profession, so stupid in all respects, that the contempt into which they sunk in my opinion soon effaced the pity I first entertained for them. In speaking even of pleasure itself, I saw they were incapable of feeling it. They appeared rapacious after every thing that could gratify their avarice; and, excepting what regarded their interest, I heard not a word drop from their lips that came from the heart. I was astonished to think how men, not abandoned like them-

selves, could support so disgustful a society. It were, in my opinion, the most cruel punishment that could be inflicted, to oblige them to keep such company.

We sat a long while at supper, and the company at length began to grow noisy. For want of love, the wine went briskly round, to inflame the guests; the discourse was not tender, but immodest, and the women strove, by the disorder of their dress, to excite those passions which should have caused that disorder. All this had a very different effect upon me, and their endeavours to seduce me only heightened my disgust. Sweet modesty! (said I to myself,) it is thine to inspire the sublimest raptures love can bestow! how impotent are female charms when thou hast left them! If the sex did but know thy power, what pains would they not take to preserve thee inviolate; if not for the sake of virtue, at least for their interest! But modesty is not to be assumed. There is not a more ridiculous artifice in the world than that of the prude who affects it. What a difference, thought I, is there between the impudence of these creatures, with their licentious expressions, and those timid and tender looks, those conversations so full of modesty, so delicate, so sentimental, which—but I dare not finish the sentence—I blush at the comparison—I reproach myself, as if it were criminal, with the delightful remembrance of her who pursues me wherever I go. But how shall I now dare to think of her?—— alas! it is impossible to erase your image from my heart: let me then strive to conceal it there.

The noise, the discourse I heard, together with the objects that presented themselves to my view, insensibly inflamed me; my two neighbours plied me incessantly with wine. I found my head confused, and, though I drank all the while a good deal of water in my wine, I now took more water, and at length determined to drink water only. It was then I per-

ceived the pretended water set before me was white wine, and that I had drank it from the first. I made no complaints, as they would only have subjected me to raillery, but gave over drinking entirely. But it was too late, the mischief was already done, and the intoxicating effects of what I had already drank soon deprived me of the little sense that remained. I was surprized, on recovering my senses, to find myself, in a retired closet, locked in the embraces of one of those creatures I had supped with, and in the same instant had the mortification to find myself as criminal as I could possibly be.

I have finished this horrible relation. Would to Heaven it might never more offend your eyes, nor torture my memory! O Eloisa! it is from you I expect my doom: I demand, I deserve your severity. Whatever be my punishment, it will be less cruel than the remembrance of my crime.

LETTER XCII.

ANSWER.

You may be easy as to the fear of having offended me. Your letter rather excited my grief than my anger. It is not me, it is yourself you have offended, by a debauch in which the heart had no share. I am at this, however, but the more afflicted; for I had much rather you should affront Eloisa than debase yourself; and the injury you have done to your own person is that only which I cannot forgive. To regard only the fault of which you accuse yourself, you are not so culpable as you imagine: I can reproach you on that account only with imprudence. But what I blame you for is of greater moment, and proceeds from a failing that has

taken deeper root than you imagine, and which it is the part of a friend to lay before you.

Your first error lies in having taken a wrong path, in which the farther you advance the more you will go astray; and I tremble to see that, unless you tread back the steps you have taken, you are inevitably lost. You have suffered yourself to be led insensibly into the very snares I dreaded. The more gross and palpable allurements of vice I knew could not seduce you, but the bad company you keep hath begun, by deluding your reason, to corrupt your morals, and hath already made the first essay of its maxims on your behaviour.

You have told me nothing, it is true, in particular, of the acquaintance you have made in Paris; but it is easy to judge of your companions by your letters, and of those who point out the objects, by your manner of describing them.——I have not concealed from you how little satisfied I have been with your remarks; you have nevertheless continued them in the same style, which has only increased my displeasure. In fact, one would rather take your observations for the sarcasms of some petit-maitre, than for the animadversions of a philosopher; and it is hardly possible to believe them written by the same hand that wrote your former letters. Do you think to study mankind by the confined behaviour of a few societies of finical prudes, and other idlers? Do none of your remarks penetrate beyond the exterior and changeable varnish which ought hardly to have engaged your attention? Was it worth while to collect with so much care those peculiarities of manners and decorum, which ten years hence will no longer exist; while the unalterable springs of the human heart, the constant and secret workings of the passions, have escaped your researches? Let us turn to your letter concerning women: in what have you instructed me to know them?

You have given, indeed, a description of their dress, which all the world might be as well acquainted with; and have made some malicious observations on the address and behaviour of some, as also of the irregularities of a few others, which you have unjustly attributed to them all, as if no person of virtuous sentiments was to be found in Paris, and every woman flaunted about in her chariot, and sat in the front boxes. Have you told me any thing that can throw real light upon their true character, taste, and maxims? and is it not strange that in describing the women of a country, a man of sense should omit what regards their domestic concerns and education of their children*? The only circumstance in that letter, characteristic of its author, is the apparent satisfaction with which you commend the goodness of their natural disposition, which, I must confess, doth honour to yours. And yet, what have you done more in that than barely justice to the sex in general? for in what country are not gentleness of manners and compassion for the distressed, the amiable qualities of the women?

What a difference had there been in the picture, if you had described what you had seen, rather than what you had heard; or, at least if you had only consulted people of sense and solidity on the occasion? Was it for you, who have taken so much pains to cultivate your genius, to throw away your time deliberately in the company of a parcel of inconsiderate young fellows, who take pleasure in the society of persons of virtue and understanding, not to imitate but only to set

* And why should he not omit it? Have the women of these times any thing to do with concerns of this kind? What would become of us and the state? What would become of our celebrated authors, our illustrious academicians, if the ladies should give up the direction of matters of literature and business, and apply themselves only to the affairs of their family?

duce and corrupt them? You lay a stress on the equality of age, with which you should have nothing to do, and forget that of sense and knowledge, which is more peculiarly essential. In spite of your violent passions, you are certainly the most pliable man in the world; and notwithstanding the ripeness of your judgment, permit yourself to be conducted so implicitly by those you converse with, that you cannot keep company with young people of your own age, without condescending to become a mere infant in their hands. Thus you mistake in your choice of proper companions, and debase yourself in not fixing upon such as have more understanding than yourself.

I do not reproach you with having been inadvertently taken into a dishonest house; but with having been conducted thither by a party of young officers, who ought never to have known you; or at least whom you should never have permitted to direct your amusements.——With respect to your project of making them converts to your own principles, I discover in it more zeal than prudence; if you are of too serious a turn to be their companion, you are too young to be their tutor, and you ought not to think of reforming others till there is nothing left to reform in yourself.

The next fault, which is of more moment and less pardonable, is to have passed voluntarily the evening in a place so unworthy of you, and not to have left the house the moment you knew what it was. Your excuses on this head are mean and pitiful. You say *it was too late to recede;* as if any decorum were necessary to be observed in such a place, or as if decorum ought ever to take place of virtue, and that it were ever too late to abstain from doing evil. As to the security you found in your aversion to the manners of such a company, I will say nothing of it; the event has shown you how well it was founded.——Speak more freely to one who

so well knows how to read your heart; say you were ashamed to leave your companions; you were afraid they would laugh at you; a momentary hiss struck you with fear, and you had rather expose yourself to the bitterness of remorse than the tartness of raillery. Do you know what a maxim you followed on this occasion? that which first viciates every innocent mind, drowns the voice of conscience in public clamour, and represses the resolution of doing well by the fear of censure. Such a mind may overcome temptations, and yet yield to the force of bad examples; may blush at being really modest, and become impudent through bashfulness; a false bashfulness that is more destructive to a virtuous mind than bad inclinations. Look well then to the security of yours; for whatever you may pretend, the fear of ridicule, which you affect to despise, prevails over you, in spite of yourself. You would sooner face a hundred dangers than one raillery, and never was seen so much timidity united to so intrepid a mind.

Not to make a parade of precepts which you know better than I, I shall content myself with proposing a method more easy and sure, perhaps, than all the arguments of philosophy. This is, on such occasions, to make in thought a slight transposition of circumstances, to anticipate a few minutes of time. If at that unfortunate supper, you had but fortified yourself against a moment's raillery, by the idea of the state of mind you should be in as soon as you got into the street: had you represented to yourself that inward contentment you would feel at having escaped the snares laid for you; the consciousness of having avoided the danger; the pleasure it would give you to write me an account of it; that which I should myself receive in reading it: had you, I say, called these circumstances to mind, is it to be supposed they would not have overbalanced the mortification of being laughed at for a mo-

ment; a mortification you would never have dreaded, could you but have foreseen the consequences? But what is this mortification, which gives consequence to the raillery of people for whom one has no esteem? This reflection would infallibly have saved you, in return for a moment's imaginary disgrace, much real and more durable shame, remorse, and danger: it would have saved (for why should I dissemble?) your friend, your Eloisa, many tears.

You determined, you tell me, to apply that evening to observation. What an employment! what observation! I blush for your excuses. Will you not also, when an opportunity offers, have the same curiosity to make observation on robbers in their dens? and to see the methods they take to seize their prey, and strip the unhappy passengers that fall into their hands? Are you ignorant that there are objects too detestable for a man of probity to look on, and that the indignation of virtue cannot support the sight of vice?

The philosopher remarks indeed the public licentiousness which he cannot prevent: he sees it, and his countenance betrays the concern it gives him: but as to that of individuals, he either opposes it, or turns away his eyes from the sight, lest he should give it a sanction by his presence. May I not ask, besides, what necessity there was to be eye-witness of such scenes, in order to judge of what passed, or the conversation that was held there? For my part, I can judge more easily of the whole, from the intention and design of such a society, than from the little you tell me of it; and the idea of those pleasures that are to be found there, gives me a sufficient insight into the characters of such as go to seek them.

I know not if your commodious scheme of philosophy has already adopted the maxims, which, it is said, are established in large towns, for the toleration of such places: but, I hope,

at least, you are not one of those who debase themselves so much as to put them in practice, under the pretext of I know not what chimerical necessity, that is known only to men of debauched lives; as if the two sexes were in this respect of a different constitution; and that during absence or celibacy, a virtuous man is under a necessity of indulging himself in liberties which are denied to a modest woman. But if this error does not lead you to prostitutes, I am afraid it will continue to lead your imagination astray. Alas! if you are determined to be despicable, be so at least without pretext: and add not the vice of lying to that of drunkenness. All those pretended necessities have no foundation in nature, but in the voluntary depravation of the senses. Even the fond illusions of love are refined by a chaste mind, and pollute it only when the heart is first depraved. On the contrary, chastity is its own support; the desires constantly repressed accustom themselves to remain at rest, and temptations are only multiplied by the habit of yielding to them. Friendship has made me twice overcome the reluctance I had to write on such a subject, and this shall be the last time; for on what plea can I hope to obtain that influence over you, which you have refused to virtue, to love, and to reason?

But I return to the important point with which I began this letter: at one-and-twenty years of age you sent me from the Valais, grave and judicious descriptions of men and things: at twenty-five you write me from Paris a pack of trifling letters, wherein good sense is sacrificed to a certain quaintness and pleasantry, very incompatible with your character. I know not how you have managed; but since you have resided among people of refined talents, yours appear to be diminished: you profited among clowns, and have lost by the wits. This is not, however, the fault of the place you are in, but of the acquaintance you have made: for no-

thing requires a greater judgment than to make a proper choice in a mixture of the excellent and execrable. If you would study the world, keep company with men of sense, who have known it by long experience, and observations made at leisure, not with giddy-headed boys, who see only the superficies of things, and laugh at what they themselves make ridiculous. Paris is full of sensible men, accustomed to reflection, and to whom every day represents a fertile field for observation. You will never make me believe that such grave and studious persons run about, as you do, from house to house, and from club to club, to divert the women and young fellows, and turn all philosophy into chit-chat. They have too much dignity thus to debase their characters, prostitute their talents, and give a sanction by their example to modes which they ought to correct. But, if even most of them should, there are certainly many who do not, and it is those you ought to have chosen for companions.

Is it not extraordinary that you should fall into the very same error in your behaviour, which you blame in the writings of the comic poets? from which you say one would imagine Paris was peopled only by persons of distinction. These are your constant theme, while those of your own rank escape your notice; as if the ridiculous prejudices of nobility had not cost you sufficiently dear to make you hate them for ever; or that you thought you degraded yourself in keeping company with honest citizens and tradesmen, the most respectable order of men, perhaps in the whole country. It is in vain you endeavour to excuse yourself, in that your acquaintance are those of Lord B——: with the assistance of these you might easily have made others of an inferior rank. So many people are desirous to rise, that it is always easy to descend; and by your own confession, the only way to come at the true manners of a nation, is to study the pri-

vate life of the most numerous order among them; for to confine your observations to those who only personate assumed characters, is only to observe the actions of a company of comedians.

I would have your curiosity exerted still farther. How comes it, that, in so opulent a city, the poor people are so miserable; while such extreme distress is hardly ever experienced among us, where, on the other hand, we have no examples of immense wealth? This question is, in my opinion, well worth your asking; but it is not the people you converse with that are to resolve it. It is in the splendid apartments of the rich, that the novice goes to learn the manners of the world; but the man of sense and experience betakes himself to the cottages of the poor.—These are the places for the detection of those iniquitous practices, that in polite circles are varnished over and hid beneath a specious show of words. It is here that the rich and powerful, by coming to the knowledge of the basest arts of oppression, feel for the unhappy what in public they only affect. If I may believe our old officers, you will learn many things in the garrets of a fifth floor, which are buried in profound silence at the *hotels* in the suburbs of St. Germains: you will find that many fine talkers would be struck dumb, if all those they have made unhappy, were present to contradict their boasted pretensions to humanity.

I know the sight of misery that excites only fruitless pity, is disagreeable; and that even the rich turn away their eyes from the unhappy objects to whom they refuse relief: but money is not the only thing the unfortunate stand in need of; and they are but indolent in well-doing, who can exert themselves only with their purse in their hands. Consolation, advice, concern, friends, protection; these are all so many resources which compassion points out to those who

are not rich, for relief of the indigent. The oppressed often stand in need only of a tongue to make known their complaints: they often want no more than a word they cannot speak, a reason they are ashamed to give, to gain entrance at the door of a great man. The intrepid countenance of disinterested virtue may remove infinite obstacles, and the eloquence of a man of probity makes even a tyrant tremble in the midst of his guards.

If you would then act as a man, learn to descend again. Humanity, like a pure salutary stream, flows always downwards to its level; fertilizing the humble vales, while it leaves dry those barren rocks, whose threatening heads cast a frightful shade, or tumbling headlong down, involve the plain in ruins.

Thus, my friend, may you make use of the past conduct, by drawing thence instructions for the future; and learn how goodness of heart may be of advantage to the understanding: whoever lives among people in office, cannot be too cautious of the corruptible maxims they inculcate; and it is only the constant exercise of their benevolence that can secure the best hearts from the contagion of ambition. Try this new kind of study; it is more worthy of you than those you have hitherto adopted: and, believe me, as the genius is impoverished, in proportion as the mind is corrupted, you will soon find, on the contrary, how much the practice of virtue elevates and improves it; you will experience how much the interest you take in the misfortunes of others will assist you in tracing their source, and will thereby learn to escape the vices that produce them.

I ought to take all the freedom with you that friendship authorizes, in the critical situation in which you at present appear, lest a second step towards debauchery should plunge you beyond recovery, and that before you have time to recol-

lect yourself. I cannot conceal from you, my friend, how much your ready and sincere confession has affected me; as I am sensible how much shame and confusion it must have cost you, and from thence how heavy this piece of ill conduct must sit upon your heart; an involuntary crime, however, is easily forgiven and forgot. But, for the future remember well that maxim, from which I shall never recede; he who is a second time deceived on these occasions, cannot be said to have been deceived the first.

Adieu, my friend; be careful, I conjure you, of your health; and be assured I shall not retain the least remembrance of a fault I have once forgiven.

P. S.—I have seen in the hands of Mr. Orbe the copies of several of your letters to Lord B——, which oblige me to retract part of the censure I have passed on the matter and manner of your observations. These letters, I must confess, treat of important subjects, and appear to be full of serious and judicious reflections. But hence it is evident, that you either treat my cousin and me disdainfully, or that you set little value on our esteem, in sending us such trivial relations as might justly forfeit it, while you transmit so much better to your friend. It is, in my opinion, doing little honour to your instructions, to think your scholars unworthy to admire your talents: for you ought to affect, at least were it only through vanity, to think us capable of it.

I own political matters are not proper subjects for women: and my uncle has tired us with them so heartily, that I can easily conceive you were afraid of doing so too. To speak freely also, these are not the topics I prefer: their utility is too foreign to affect me, and their arguments too subtle to make any lasting impression. Bound to respect the government under which it is my fate to have been born, I give my-

self no trouble to inquire whether there are any better. To what end should I be instructed in the knowledge of government, who have so little power to establish them? And why should I afflict myself with the consideration of evils too great for me to remedy, when I am surrounded with others that are in my power to redress? But, from my love to you, the interest I should not take in the subject, I shall take in the writer. I collect with a pleasing admiration all the fruits of your genius; and, proud of merit so deserving of my heart, I beseech of love only so much wit as to make me relish yours. Refuse me not then the pleasure of knowing and admiring your works of merit. Will you mortify me so much as to give me reason to think that, if Heaven should ever unite us, you will not judge your companion worthy to know and adopt your sentiments?

LETTER XCIII.

FROM ELOISA.

We are undone! all is discovered! your letters are gone! they were there last night, and could have been taken away but to-day. It is my mother: it can be nobody else. If my father should see them, my life is in danger. But why should he not see them, if I must renounce—Heavens! my mother sends for me! Whither shall I fly? How shall I support her presence? O that I could hide myself in the centre of the earth! I tremble every limb, and am unable to move one step—the shame, the mortification, the killing reproaches! I have deserved it, I will support it all. But, oh! the grief, the tears of a weeping mother—O my heart, how piercing! —she waits for me—I can stay no longer—she will know—

I must tell her all—Regianino will be dismissed. Write no more till you hear further—who knows if ever—yet I might —what! deceive her!—deceive my mother!—alas! if our safety lies in supporting a falsehood, farewell, we are indeed undone!

LETTER XCIV.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

Oh! how you afflict all those who love you! what tears have already been shed on your account in an unfortunate family, whose tranquillity has been disturbed by you alone! Dread to add to these tears by covering us with mourning! tremble lest the death of an afflicted parent should be the last effect of the poison you have poured into the heart of her child, and that your extravagant passion will at length fill you with eternal remorse. My friendship made me support your folly, while it was capable of being nourished by the shadow of hope; but how can it allow a vain constancy condemned by honour and reason, and which, producing nothing but pain and misfortune, can only deserve the name of obstinacy?

You know in what manner the secret of your passion, so long concealed from the suspicions of my aunt, has been discovered by your letters. How sensibly must such a stroke be felt by a tender and virtuous mother, less irritated against you than against herself! She blames her blind negligence; she deplores her fatal delusion; her deepest affliction arises from her having had too high esteem for her daughter; and her grief has filled Eloisa with a hundred times more sorrow than all her reproaches.

My poor cousin's distress is not to be conceived. No idea can be formed of it without seeing her. Her heart seems stifled with grief, and the violence of the sensations by which it is oppressed, gives an air of stupidity more terrifying than the most piercing cries. She continues night and day by her mother's bed, with a mournful look, her eyes fixed on the floor, and profoundly silent; yet serving her with greater attention and vivacity than ever; then instantly relapsing into a state of dejection, she appears to be no longer the same person. It is very evident, that the mother's illness supports the spirits of her daughter; and if an ardent desire to serve her did not give her strength, the extinguished lustre of her eyes, her paleness, her extreme grief, make me apprehensive she would stand in great need of the assistance she bestows. My aunt likewise perceives it; and I see, from the earnestness with which she recommends Eloisa's health to my care, how her poor heart is agitated, and how much reason we have to hate you, for disturbing such a pleasing union.

This anxiety is still increased by the care of hiding from a passionate father a dangerous secret, which the mother, who trembles for the life of her daughter, would conceal. She has resolved to observe in his presence their former familiarity; but if maternal tenderness with pleasure takes advantage of this pretext, a daughter filled with confusion dares not yield her heart to caresses which she believes feigned, and which are the more painful, in proportion as they would be engaging, could she presume to think them real. At the fond caresses of her father, she looks towards her mother with an air so tender, and so humble, that she seems to say: Ah! why am I not still worthy of your tenderness?

In my frequent conversations with the Baroness d'Etange, I could easily find, by the mildness of her reprimands, and by the tone in which she spoke of you, that Eloisa has endea-

voured, to the utmost of her power, to calm her too just indignation, and that she has spared no pains to justify us both at her own expence. Even your letters, beside a violent passion, contain a kind of excuse which has not escaped her: she reproaches you less for abusing her confidence, than she does her own weakness for putting it in your power. She has such an esteem for you, as to believe that no other man in your place would have made a better resistance; and that your faults even spring from virtue. She now, she says, perceives the vanity of that boasted probity which does not secure a person in love, who is in other respects a worthy man, from the guilt of corrupting a virtuous girl, and without scruple dishonouring a whole family, to indulge a momentary madness. But to what purpose do we recur to what is past? our present business is to conceal, under an everlasting veil, this odious mystery; to efface, if possible, the least vestige of it, and to second the goodness of Heaven, which has left no visible proof of your folly. The secret is confined to six safe persons. The repose of all you have loved, the life of a mother reduced to despair, the honour of a respectable family, your own virtue, all these still depend on you, all these point out your duty: you may repair the evil you have done, you may render yourself worthy of Eloisa, and justify her fault, by renouncing your pretensions. If I am not deceived in my opinion of your heart, nothing but the greatness of such a sacrifice can be equal to the love that renders it necessary. Relying on the sublimity of your sentiments, I have promised, in your name, every thing you ought to perform; dare to undeceive me, if I have presumed too much on your merit, or be now what you ought to be. It is necessary to sacrifice either your mistress or your love, and to show yourself the most abject, or the most virtuous of mankind.

This unfortunate mother resolved to write to you: she even began the painful task. Oh! what stabs would her bitter complaints have given you! how wolud her affecting reproaches have wounded your heart! and her humble entreaties have filled you with shame! I have torn in pieces this distressful letter, which you would never have been able to support. I could not endure the preposterous sight of a mother humbling herself before the seducer of her child: you are worthy, at least, that we should not use means that would rend a heart of adamant, and drive to the extremes of despair a man of uncommon sensibility.

Were this the first effort love had demanded from you, I might doubt of the success, and hesitate as to the degree of esteem you deserve: but the sacrifice you have made to the honour of Eloisa, by quitting this country, is a pledge of that you are going to make to her repose, by putting a stop to an useless correspondence. The first efforts of virtue are always the most painful, and you will lose the advantage of that which has cost you so dear, by obstinately maintaining a vain correspondence, attended with such danger to her you love, without the least advantage to either of you; and which can only serve to prolong the torments to both. No longer doubt it; it is become absolutely necessary, that this Eloisa, who was so dear to you, should be forgotten by the man she loved so well: in vain you dissemble your misfortunes; she was lost to you at the moment you left her; or, rather, Heaven disposed of her, before she gave herself to you; for her father had promised her to another before his return, and you too well know that the promise of that inexorable man is irrevocable. In what manner soever you regulate your conduct, your desires are opposed by an inevitable fate, and you can never possess her. The only choice you have left, is either to plunge her into an abyss of misfortunes and reproach,

or to honour what you have adored, and restore to her, instead of the happiness she has lost, at least, the prudence, peace, and safety of which she has been deprived, by her fatal connection with you.

How would you be afflicted, how would you be stung with remorse, could you contemplate the real state of my unhappy friend, and the abasement to which she is reduced by remorse and shame! How is her lustre tarnished, how languid all her gracefulness! How are all her noble and engaging sentiments unhappily absorbed in this one passion! Her friendship itself is cooled; scarcely does she partake of the pleasure I feel when we meet: her sick heart is only sensible of love and grief. Alas! what is become of that fondness and sensibility, of that delicacy of taste, of that tender interest in the pains and pleasures of others? She is still, I confess, mild, generous, compassionate: the amiable habit of doing well cannot be effaced, but it is only a blind habit, a taste without reflection. Her actions are the same, but they are not performed with the same zeal; those sublime sentiments are weakened, that divine flame is extinguished, this angel is now no more than woman. Oh! what a noble mind have you seduced from the path of virtue!

LETTER XCV.

TO THE BARONESS D'ETANGE.

Overwhelmed with sorrow, I throw myself at your feet; not to show a repentance that is out of my power, but to expiate an involuntary crime, by renouncing all that could render life a blessing. As no human passion ever equalled that inspired by your celestial daughter, never was there a sacrifice equal to that I am going to make to the most re-

spectable of mothers; but Eloisa has too well taught me how to sacrifice happiness to duty: she has too courageously set me the example, for me, at least in one instance, not to imitate her. Were my blood capable of removing your distress, I would shed it in silence, and complain of being able to give you only so feeble a proof of my affection; but to break the most sweet, the most pure, the most sacred bond that ever united two hearts, is, alas! an effort which the whole universe could not oblige me to make, and which you alone could obtain.

Yes, I promise to live far from her, as long as you require it: I will abstain from seeing and writing to her; this I swear by your precious life, so necessary to the preservation of her's. I submit, not without horror, but without murmuring, to whatever you condescend to enjoin her and me. I will even add, that her happiness is capable of alleviating my misery, and that I shall die contented, if you give her a husband worthy of her. Oh! let him be found, and let him dare to tell me that his passion for Eloisa is greater than mine! In vain may he have every thing that I want; if he has not my heart, he has nothing for Eloisa; but I have only this honest and tender heart. Alas! I have nothing more. Love, which levels all, exalts not the person; it elevates only the sentiments. Oh! had I dared to listen to mine for you, how often would my lips have pronounced the tender name of mother in addressing you!

Deign to confide in oaths, which shall not be vain, and in a man who is not a deceiver. If I ever dishonour your esteem, I must first dishonour myself. My unexperienced heart knew not the danger, till it was too late to fly: I had not then learned of your daughter the cruel art she has since taught me, of conquering love with its own weapons. Banish your fears, I conjure you. Is there a person in the world

to whom her repose, her felicity, her honour, is dearer than it is to me? No, my word and my heart are securities for the engagement into which I now enter, both in my own name, and in that of my lovely friend. Assure yourself that no indiscreet word shall ever pass my lips, and that I will breathe my last sigh without divulging the cause of my death. Calm, therefore, that affliction which consumes you, and which adds infinitely to my sufferings; dry up the tears that pierce my very soul; try to recover your health; restore to the most affectionate daughter the world ever produced the happiness she has renounced for you: be happy; live, that she may value life; for, regardless of our misfortunes, to be the mother of Eloisa is still sufficient cause for happiness.

LETTER XCVI.

TO MRS. ORBE.

With the preceding Letter inclosed.

THERE, cruel friend! is my answer. When you read it, if you know my heart, you will burst into tears, unless your's has lost its sensibility; but no longer overwhelm me with that merciless esteem which I so dearly purchase, and which serves but to increase my torture.

Has your barbarous hand then dared to break the gentle union formed under your eye, even almost from infancy, and which your friendship seemed to share with so much pleasure? I am now as wretched as you would have me, and as there is a possibility of being. Do you conceive all the evil you have done? Are you sensible that you have torn me from my soul? that what I have lost is beyond redemption, and that it is better to die an hundred times, than not

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to live for each other? Why do you urge the happiness of Eloisa? can she be happy without contentment? Why do you mention the danger of her mother? ah! what is the life of a mother; of mine, of yours, of her's itself? what is the existence of the whole world, to the delightful sensation by which we were united? O senseless and savage virtue! I obey thy unmeaning voice. I abhor thee, while I sacrifice all to thy dictates. What avail thy vain consolations against the distressful agonies of the soul? Go, thou sullen idol of the unhappy, thou only servest to augment their misery, by depriving them of the resources which fortune offers. Yet I obey; yes, cruel friend, I obey. I will become, if possible, as insensible and savage as yourself. I will forget every thing upon earth that was dear to me. I will no longer hear or pronounce Eloisa's name, or yours. I will no more recall their insupportable remembrance. An inflexible vexation and rage shall preserve me from such misfortunes. A steady obstinacy shall supply the place of courage: I have paid too dearly for my sensibility; it were better to renounce humanity itself.

LETTER XCVII.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

Your letter is indeed extremely pathetic; but there is so much love and virtue in your conduct, that it effaces the bitterness of your complaints: you are so generous that I have not the courage to quarrel with you; for whatever extravagancies we may commit, if we are still capable of sacrificing all that is dear to us, we deserve praise rather than reproach; therefore, notwithstanding your abuse, you never was so

to whom her repose, her felicity, her honour, is dearer than it is to me? No, my word and my heart are securities for the engagement into which I now enter, both in my own name, and in that of my lovely friend. Assure yourself that no indiscreet word shall ever pass my lips, and that I will breathe my last sigh without divulging the cause of my death. Calm, therefore, that affliction which consumes you, and which adds infinitely to my sufferings; dry up the tears that pierce my very soul; try to recover your health; restore to the most affectionate daughter the world ever produced the happiness she has renounced for you: be happy; live, that she may value life; for, regardless of our misfortunes, to be the mother of Eloisa is still sufficient cause for happiness.

LETTER XCVI.

TO MRS. ORBE.

With the preceding Letter inclosed.

THERE, cruel friend! is my answer. When you read it, if you know my heart, you will burst into tears, unless your's has lost its sensibility; but no longer overwhelm me with that merciless esteem which I so dearly purchase, and which serves but to increase my torture.

Has your barbarous hand then dared to break the gentle union formed under your eye, even almost from infancy, and which your friendship seemed to share with so much pleasure? I am now as wretched as you would have me, and as there is a possibility of being. Do you conceive all the evil you have done? Are you sensible that you have torn me from my soul? that what I have lost is beyond redemption, and that it is better to die an hundred times, than not

to live for each other? Why do you urge the happiness of Eloisa? can she be happy without contentment? Why do you mention the danger of her mother? ah! what is the life of a mother; of mine, of yours, of her's itself? what is the existence of the whole world, to the delightful sensation by which we were united? O senseless and savage virtue! I obey thy unmeaning voice. I abhor thee, while I sacrifice all to thy dictates. What avail thy vain consolations against the distressful agonies of the soul? Go, thou sullen idol of the unhappy, thou only servest to augment their misery, by depriving them of the resources which fortune offers. Yet I obey; yes, cruel friend, I obey. I will become, if possible, as insensible and savage as yourself. I will forget every thing upon earth that was dear to me. I will no longer hear or pronounce Eloisa's name, or yours. I will no more recall their insupportable remembrance. An inflexible vexation and rage shall preserve me from such misfortunes. A steady obstinacy shall supply the place of courage: I have paid too dearly for my sensibility; it were better to renounce humanity itself.

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dear to me as since you have made me so fully sensible of your worth.

Return thanks to that virtue you believe you hate, and which does more for you than even your love. There is not one of us, not even my aunt, whom you have not gained by a sacrifice, the value of which she well knows. She could not read your letter without melting into tears: she had even the weakness to shew it to her daughter; but poor Eloisa's endeavours, while she read it, to stifle her sighs and tears, quite overcame her, and she fainted away.

This tender mother, whom your letters had greatly affected, begins to perceive, from every circumstance, that your hearts are of a superior mould, and that they are distinguished by a natural sympathy, which neither time nor human efforts will ever be able to efface. She who stands in such need of consolation, would herself freely console her daughter, if prudence did not restrain her; and I see her too ready to become her confidant, to fear that she can be angry with me. Yesterday I heard her say, even before Eloisa, perhaps a little indiscreetly, "Ah! if it only depended on me!"—and though she said no more, I perceived, by a kiss which Eloisa impressed on her hand, that she too well understood her meaning. I am even certain that she was several times inclined to speak to her inflexible husband; but whether the danger of exposing her daughter to the fury of an enraged father, or whether it was for fear of herself, her timidity has hitherto kept her silent; and her illness increases so fast, that I am afraid she will never be able to execute her half-performed resolution.

However, notwithstanding the faults of which you are the cause, that integrity of heart, visible in your mutual affection, has given her such an opinion of you, that she confides in the promise you have both made, of discontinuing your

correspondence, and has not taken any precaution to have her daughter more closely watched: indeed, if Eloisa makes an ill return to her confidence, she will no longer be worthy of her affection. You would both deserve the severest treatment, if you were capable of deceiving the best of mothers, and of abusing her esteem.

I shall not endeavour to revive in your mind the hopes which I myself do not entertain; but I would show you, that the most honest is also the wisest part, and that, if you have any resource left, it is in the sacrifice which reason and honour require. Mother, relations, and friends, are now all for you, except the father, who will by this method be gained over, if any thing can do it. Whatever imprecations you may utter in the moment of despair, you have a hundred times proved to us, that there is no path more sure of leading to happiness than that of virtue. Therefore, resume your courage, and be a man! be yourself. If I am well acquainted with your heart, the most cruel manner of losing Eloisa would be by rendering yourself unworthy of her.

LETTER XCVIII.

FROM ELOISA.

She is no more! my eyes have seen hers closed for ever; my lips have received her last sigh; my name was the last word she pronounced; her last look was fixed on me. No, it was not life she seemed to quit; too little had I known how to render that valuable! From me alone she was torn. She saw me without a guide, and void of hope, overwhelmed by my misfortunes and my crime: to her, death was nothing; she grieved only to leave her daughter in such a state of misery. She had but too much reason. What had she to

regret on earth? What could there be here below, in her eye, worth the immortal prize of patience and virtue, reserved for her in a better world? What had she to do on earth, but to lament my shame? Oh! most incomparable woman! thou now dwellest in the abode of glory and felicity! thou livest; whilst I, given up to repentance and despair, deprived for ever of thy care, of thy counsel, of thy sweet caresses, am dead to happiness, to peace, to innocence! Nothing do I feel but thy loss; nothing do I see but my reproach: my life is only pain and grief. Oh! my dear, my tender mother! alas! I am more dead than thou art!

Good God! to whom do I shed these tears, and vent these sighs? The cruel man who caused them, I make my confidant! With him, who has rendered my life unhappy, I dare to deplore my misfortunes! Yes, yes, barbarous as you are, share the torments you have made me suffer. You for whom I have plunged the poniard into a mother's bosom, tremble at the misfortunes you have occasioned, and shudder with me at the horrid act you have committed. To what eye dare I presume to appear as despicable as I really am? Before whom shall I degrade myself to the bent of my remorse? To whom, but to the accomplice of my crime, can I sufficiently make it known? It is my insupportable punishment to have no accuser but my own heart, and to see attributed to the goodness of my disposition the impure tears that flow from a bitter repentance. I saw, I trembling saw, the poisonous sorrow put a period to the life of my unhappy mother. In vain did her pity for me prevent her confessing it; in vain she affected to attribute the progress of her illness to the cause by which it was produced; in vain was my cousin induced to talk in the same strain. Nothing could deceive a heart torn with regret; and, to my lasting torment, I

shall carry to my tomb the frightful idea of having shortened her life, to whom I am indebted for my own.

O thou, whom Heaven in its anger raised up to render me guilty and unhappy, for the last time receive into thy bosom the tears thou hast occasioned! I come not, as formerly, to share with thee the grief that ought to be mutual.—These are the sighs of a last adieu, which escape from me in spite of myself. It is done: the empire of love is subdued in a soul condemned wholly to despair. I will consecrate the rest of my days to lamentation for the best of mothers. To her I will sacrifice that passion which was the cause of her death: happy shall I be, if the painful conquest be sufficient to expiate my guilt! Oh! if her immortal mind penetrates into the bottom of my heart, she will know that the sacrifice I make is not entirely unworthy of her! Share with me, then, an effort which you have rendered necessary. If you have any respect remaining for the memory of an union once so dear and fatal, by that I conjure you to fly from me for ever; no more to write to me; no more to aggravate my remorse; but suffer me to forget, if possible, our former connection. May my eyes never behold you more! may I never more hear your name pronounced! may the remembrance of you never more agitate my mind! I dare still entreat, in the name of that love which ought never to have existed, that to so many causes of grief you add not that of seeing my last request despised. Adieu then for the last time, dear and only——Ah! fool that I am—adieu for ever!

LETTER XCIX.

TO MRS. ORBE.

At last the veil is rent; the long illusion is vanished; all my flattering hopes are extinguished; nothing is left to feed the eternal flame, but a bitter yet pleasing remembrance, which supports my life, and nourishes my torments with the vain recollection of a happiness that is now no more.

Is it then true that I have tasted supreme felicity? Am I the same being whose happiness was once so perfect? Could any one be susceptible of such torments, who was not doomed to eternal misery? Can he who has enjoyed the blessings I have lost, be deprived of felicity and still exist? And can such contrary sensations affect the same mind? O ye glorious and happy days, surely ye were immortal! ye were too celestial ever to perish! your whole duration was one continued ecstacy, by which ye were converged like eternity into a single point. I knew neither of past nor future, and I tasted at once the delights of a thousand ages. Alas! ye are vanished like a shadow! that eternity of happiness was but an instant of my life. Time now resumes his tardy pace, and slowly measures the sad remains of my existence.

To render my distress still more insupportable, my increasing affliction is cruelly aggravated by the loss of all that was dear to me. It is possible, Madam, that you still have some regard for me: but you are busied by other cares, and employed in other duties. These my complaints, to which you once listened with concern, are now indiscreet. Eloisa! Eloisa herself discourages and abandons me. Gloomy remorse has banished love for ever. All is changed with respect to me, except the steadfastness of my own heart, which serves but to render my fate still more dreadful.

But to what purpose is it to say what I am, and what I ought to be? Eloisa suffers! is it a time to think of myself? her sorrow adds bitterness to mine. Yes, I had rather she would cease to love me, and that she were happy—Cease to love me!—can she—hope it?—never, never!——She has indeed forbid me to see or write to her. Alas! she removes the comforter, but never can the torment! Should the loss of a tender mother deprive her of a still more tender friend? Does she think to alleviate her griefs by multiplying her misfortunes? O love! can nature be revenged only at thy expence? No, no; in vain she pretends to forget me. Can her tender heart ever be separated from mine? Do I not retain it in spite of herself? Are sensations like those we have experienced to be forgotten, and can they be remembered without feeling them still? Triumphant love was the bane of her felicity; and having conquered her passion, she will only be the more deserving of pity. Her days will pass in sorrow, tormented at once by vain regret and vain desires, without ever being able to fulfil the obligations either of love or virtue.

Do not imagine, however, that in complaining of her errors I cease to respect them. After so many sacrifices, it is too late for me to begin to disobey. Since she commands, it is sufficient; she shall hear of me no more. Is my fate now sufficiently dreadful? Renounce my Eloisa! yes, but that is not the chief cause of my despair; it is for her I feel the keenest pangs; and her misfortunes render me more miserable than my own. You, whom she loves more than all the world, and who, next to me, are best acquainted with her worth; you, my amiable friend, are the only blessing she has left: a blessing so valuable as to render the loss of all the rest supportable. Be you her recompence for the comforts of which she is deprived, and for those also which she rejects:

let a sacred friendship supply at once the tenderness of a parent and a lover, by administering every consolation that may contribute to her happiness. Oh! let her be happy, if she can be so, how great soever the purchase! May she soon recover the peace of mind of which I, alas! have robbed her: I shall then be less sensible of the torment to which I am doomed. Since in my own eyes I am nothing; since it is my fate to pass my life in dying for her; let her regard me as already dead: I am satisfied, if this idea will add to her tranquillity. Heaven grant, that by your kindness, she may be restored to her former excellence, and her former happiness.

Unhappy daughter! alas, thy mother is no more! this is a loss that cannot be repaired, and for which, as long as she reproaches herself, she can never be consoled. Her troubled conscience requires of her this dear and tender mother; and thus the most dreadful remorse is added to her affliction. O Eloisa! oughtest thou to feel these terrible sensations? thou who wert a witness of the sickness and of the last moments of that unfortunate parent! I entreat, I conjure you to tell me what I ought to believe. If I am guilty, tear my heart in pieces: if our crimes have been the cause of her death, we are two monsters unworthy of existence; and it were a double crime to think of so fatal an union: oh! it were even a crime to live! But, no; I cannot believe that so pure a flame could produce such baleful effects. Surely, the sentiments of love are too noble. Can Heaven be unjust? And could she, who sacrificed her happiness to the author of her life, ever deserve to be the cause of her death?

LETTER C.

THE ANSWER.

How can I cease to love you, when my esteem for you is daily increasing? How can I stifle my affection, whilst you are growing every day more worthy of my regard? No, my dear, my excellent friend! what we were to each other in early life, we shall continue to be for ever; and if our mutual attachment no longer increases, it is because it cannot be increased. All the difference is, that I then loved you as my brother, and that now I love you as my son; for though we are both younger than you, and were even your scholars, I now in some measure consider you as ours. In teaching us to think, you have learnt of us sensibility; and whatever your English philosopher may say, this education is more valuable than the other: if it is reason that constitutes the man, it is sensibility that conducts him.

Would you know why I have changed my conduct towards you? It is not, believe me, because my heart is not still the same; but because your situation is changed. I favoured your passion while there remained a single ray of hope; but since, by obstinately continuing to aspire to Eloisa, you can only make her unhappy; to flatter your expectations would be to injure you.—I had even rather increase your discontent, and thus render you less deserving of my compassion. When the happiness of both becomes impossible, all that is left for a hopeless lover, is to sacrifice his own to that of the object beloved.

This, my generous friend, you have performed in the most painful sacrifice that ever was made; but, by renouncing Eloisa, you will purchase her repose, though at the expence of your own.

I dare scarce repeat to you the ideas that occur to me on this subject; but they are fraught with consolation, and that emboldens me. In the first place, I believe that true love, as well as virtue, has this advantage, that it is rewarded by every sacrifice we make to it, and that we in some measure enjoy the privations we impose on ourselves, in the very idea of what they cost us, and of the motives by which we were induced. You will be sensible that your love for Eloisa was in proportion to her merit; and that will increase your happiness. The exquisite self-love, which knows how to reap advantage from painful virtue, will mingle its charm with that of love. You will say to yourself, I know how to love, with a pleasure more durable and more delicate than even possession itself would have afforded. The latter wears out the passion by constant enjoyment; but the other lasts for ever; and you will still enjoy it, even when you cease to love.

Besides, if what Eloisa and you have so often told me be true, that love is the most delightful sensation that can enter into the human heart, every thing that prolongs and fixes it, even at the expence of a thousand vexations, is still a blessing. If love is a desire that is increased by obstacles, as you still say, it ought never to be satisfied; it is better to preserve it at any rate, than that it should be extinguished in pleasure. Your passion, I confess, has stood the proof of possession, of time, of absence, and of dangers of every kind; it has conquered every obstacle, except the most powerful of all, that of having nothing more to conquer, and of feeding only on itself. The world has never seen the passion stand this proof; what right have you then to hope that yours would have stood the test? Time, which might have joined to the disgust of a long possession the progress of age, and the decline of beauty, seems by your separation fixed and motionless in your favour; you will be always to each other in the

bloom of your years; you will incessantly see her, as she was when you beheld her at parting; and your hearts, united even to the grave, will prolong, by a charming illusion, your youth and your love.

Had you never been happy, you might have been tormented by insurmountable inquietudes; your heart might have panted after a felicity of which it was not unworthy; your warm imagination would have incessantly required that which you have not obtained. But love has no delights which you have not tasted, and in your own style, you have exhausted in one year the pleasures of a whole life. Remember the passionate letter you wrote after a certain rash interview. I read it with an emotion I had never before experienced: it had no traces of the permanent state of a truly tender heart, but was filled with the last delirium of a mind inflamed with passion, and intoxicated with pleasure. You yourself may judge that such transports are not to be twice experienced in this life, and that death ought immediately to succeed. This, my friend, was the summit of all; and whatever love or fortune might have done for you, your passion and your felicity must have declined. That instant was also the beginning of your disgrace, and Eloisa was taken from you, at the moment when she could inspire no new sensations, as if fate intended to secure your passion from being exhausted, and to leave, in the remembrance of your past pleasures, a pleasure more sweet than all those you could now have enjoyed.

Comfort yourself then with the loss of a blessing that would certainly have escaped you, and would besides have deprived you of that you now possess. Happiness and love would have vanished at once; you have at least preserved that passion, and we are not without pleasure, while we continue to love. The idea of extinguished love is more terrifying to a tender

heart, than that of an unhappy flame; and to feel a disgust for what we possess is an hundred times worse than regretting what is lost.

If the reproaches made you by my afflicted cousin, on the death of her mother, were well founded, the cruel remembrance would, I confess, poison that of your love, which ought for ever to be destroyed by so fatal an idea; but give no credit to her grief; it deceives her; or rather the cause to which she would ascribe her sorrow is only a pretence to justify its excess. Her tender mind is always in fear that her affliction is not sufficiently severe, and she feels a kind of pleasure in adding bitterness to her distress, but she certainly imposes on herself; she cannot be sincere.

Do you think she could support the dreadful remorse she would feel, if she really believed she had shortened her mother's life? No, no, my friend, she would not then weep, she would have sunk with her into the grave. The Baroness d'Etange's disease is well known; it was a dropsy of the pericardium, which was incurable, and her life was despaired of, even before she had discovered your correspondence. I own it afflicted her much, but she had great consolation. How comfortable was it to that tender mother to see, while she lamented the fault of her daughter, by how many virtues it was counterbalanced, and to be forced to admire the dignity of her soul, while she lamented the weakness of nature! How pleasing to perceive with what affection she loved her! Such indefatigable zeal! Such continual solicitude! Such grief at having offended her! What regret, what tears, what affecting caresses, what unwearied sensibility! In the eyes of the daughter were visible all the mother's sufferings; it was she who served her in the day, and watched her by night; it was from her hand that she received every assistance: you would have thought her some other Eloisa; for

her natural delicacy disappeared; she was strong and robust; the most painful services caused no fatigue, and the intrepidity of her soul seemed to have created her a new body. She did every thing, yet appeared to be unemployed; she was every where, and yet rarely left her; she was perpetually on herknees by the bed, with her lips pressed to her mother's hand, bewailing her illness and her own misfortunes, and confounding these two sensations, in order to increase her affliction. I never saw any person enter my aunt's chamber during the last days, without being moved even to tears at this most affecting spectacle, to behold two hearts more closely uniting, at the very moment when they were to be torn asunder. It was visible that their only cause of anguish was their separation, and that to live or die would have been indifferent to either, could they have remained or departed together.

So far from adopting Eloisa's gloomy ideas, assure yourself, that every thing that could be hoped for from human assistance and consolation, has, on her part, concurred to retard the progress of her mother's disease, and that her tenderness and care have undoubtedly preserved her longer with us than she would otherwise have continued. My aunt herself has told me a hundred times that her last days were the sweetest of her life, and that the happiness of her daughter was the only thing wanting to complete her own.

If grief must be supposed in any degree to have hastened her dissolution, it certainly sprang from another source. It is to her husband it ought to be ascribed. Being naturally inconstant, he lavished the fire of his youth on a thousand objects infinitely less pleasing than his virtuous wife; and when age brought him back to her, he treated her with that inflexible severity with which faithless husbands are accustomed to aggravate their faults. My poor cousin has felt the

effects of it. An high opinion of his nobility, and that roughness of disposition which nothing can ever soften, have produced your misfortunes and hers. Her mother, who had always a regard for you, and who discovered Eloisa's love when it was too violent to be extinguished, had long secretly bemoaned the misfortune of not being able to conquer either the inclinations of her daughter, or the obstinacy of her husband, and of being the first cause of an evil which she could not remedy. When your letters unexpectedly fell into her hands, and she found how far you had misused her confidence, she was afraid of losing all by endeavouring to save all, and to hazard the life of her child in attempting to restore her honour. She several times sounded her husband without success. She often resolved to venture an entire confidence in him, and to show him the full extent of his duty; but she was always restrained by her timidity. She hesitated while it was in her power; and when she would have told him, she was no longer able to speak; her strength failed her, she carried the fatal secret with her to the grave; and I who know his austerity, without having the least idea how far it may be tempered by natural affection, am satisfied, since Eloisa's life is in no danger.

All this she knows; but you will ask, what I think of her apparent remorse? In answer to which, I must tell you, that love is more ingenuous than she. Overcome with grief for the loss of her mother, she would willingly forget you; and, in spite of herself, love disturbs her conscience, in order to bring you to her memory. He chooses that her tears should be connected with the object of her passion; but she, not daring to employ her thoughts directly on you, he deceives her into it under the mask of repentance: thus he imposes on her with so much art, that she is willing to increase her woes, rather than banish you from her thoughts.

Your heart may perhaps be ignorant of such subterfuges, but they are not the less natural; for though your passion may be equal in degree, its nature is very different. Yours is warm and violent, hers soft and tender; your sensations are breathed forth with vehemence, but hers retort upon herself, and pierce her very inmost soul. Love animates and supports your heart, whilst hers is oppressed and dejected with its weight; all its springs are relaxed; her strength is gone; her courage is extinguished; and her virtue has lost its power. Her heroic faculties are not however annihilated, but suspended: a momentary crisis may restore them to their full vigour, or totally destroy their existence. One step farther in this gloomy path, and she is lost; but if her incomparable soul should recover herself, she will be greater, more heroic, more virtuous than ever, and there will be no danger of a relapse. Learn, then, in this perilous situation, to revere the object of your love. Any thing that should come from you, though it were against yourself, would at this time prove mortal. If you are determined to persist, your triumph will be certain; but you will never possess the same Eloisa.

LETTER CI.

FROM LORD B——.

I HAD some pretensions to your friendship; you were become serviceable to me, and I was prepared to meet you. But what are my pretensions, my necessities, or my eagerness to you? You have forgot me; you do not even deign to write to me. I am not ignorant of your solitude, nor of your discreet design: you are weary of existence. Die then,

weak youth—yes, die, thou daring, yet cowardly mortal; but in thy last moments, remember that thou hast stung the soul of thy sincere friend with the reflection of having served an ungrateful man.

LETTER CII.

ANSWER.

Yes, my kind friend, you may come. I was determined to taste no more pleasure upon earth; but we will meet once more. You are wrong; it is as impossible that you should meet with ingratitude, as that I should ever be ungrateful.

BILLET.

FROM ELOISA.

It is time to renounce the errors of youth, and to abandon an illusive hope. I can never be yours. Restore to me that liberty of which my father chooses to dispose; or complete my misery by a refusal which will ruin me for ever without producing any advantage to yourself.

Eloisa Etange.

LETTER CIII.

FROM THE BARON D'ETANGE.

In which the preceding Billet was inclosed.

If there remains in the mind of a seducer the least sentiment of honour or humanity, answer the billet of an unhap-

py girl, whose heart you have corrupted, and who should no longer exist, if I could suppose her to have carried the forgetfulness of herself any farther. I should not indeed be much surprized if the same philosophy which taught her to catch at the first man she saw, should also instruct her to disobey her father. Think of this matter. I always choose to proceed with lenity and decency, when these methods are likely to succeed; but because I act thus with you, you are not to suppose me ignorant in what manner a gentleman should take revenge of those beneath him.

LETTER CIV.

THE ANSWER.

Let me entreat you, Sir, to spare these vain menaces, and that unjust reproach, which can neither terrify nor humble me. Between two persons of the same age there can be no *seducer* but love, and you can have no right to vilify a man whom your daughter honoured with her esteem.

What concessions do you expect, and from what authority are they demanded? Is it to the author of all my misfortunes that I must sacrifice my remaining glimpse of hope? I will respect the father of Eloisa; but let him deign to be mine, if he expects obedience. No, Sir, what opinion soever you may entertain of your proceedings, they will not oblige me, for your sake, to relinquish such valuable and just pretensions. As you are the sole cause of my misery, I owe you nothing but hatred; your pretensions are without foundation. But Eloisa commands: her I shall never disobey; therefore you have my consent. Another may possess her, but I shall be more worthy.

If your daughter had deigned to consult me concerning the limits of your authority, doubt not but I would have taught her to disregard your unjust pretensions. How despotic soever may be the empire you assume, my rights are infinitely more sacred. The chain by which we are united marks the extent of paternal dominion even in the estimation of human laws, and whilst you appeal to the law of nature, you yourself are trampling upon its institutions.

Do not allege that delicate phantom honour, which you seem so determined to vindicate; for here again you are the sole offender. Respect Eloisa's choice, and your honour is secure; for I honour you in my heart, regardless of your insults. Notwithstanding all your Gothic maxims, one honest man was never dishonoured by his alliance with another. If my presumption offends you, attempt my life; against you I shall never defend it. As to the rest, I am little anxious to know in what consists the honour of a gentleman; but with regard to that of an honest man I own it concerns me, and therefore I shall defend and preserve it pure and spotless to the end of my life.

Go, inhuman father, and meditate the destruction of your only child, whilst she, full of duty and affection, stands ready to yield her happiness a victim to prejudice and opinion: but be assured your own remorse will one day severely revenge my injuries, and you will then perceive, when it is too late, that your blind and unnatural hatred was no more fatal to me than to yourself. That I shall be wretched is most certain; but if ever the just feelings of nature should emerge from the bottom of your heart, how infinitely greater will be your unhappiness in having sacrificed the only daughter of your bosom to a mere phantom—a daughter who has no equal in beauty, merit, or virtue, and on whom indulgent Heaven has bestowed every blessing, except a kind father.

BILLET.

Inclosed in the foregoing.

I RESTORE to Eloisa Etange the power to dispose of herself, and to give her hand without consulting her heart.

S. G.

LETTER CV.

FROM ELOISA.

I DESIGNED to give you a description of the scene which produced the billet you have received; but my father took his measures so artfully, that it ended only the instant before the post went out. His letter has certainly saved the mail, as this will be too late; so that your resolution will be taken, and your answer dispatched, before it can possibly reach you: therefore all detail would now be useless. I have done my duty; you will do yours: but fate will overwhelm us, and we are betrayed by honour. We are divided for ever! and to increase my horror, I am going to be forced into the arms of——O Heavens! it was once in my power to live in thine. Just God—we must tremble and be silent.

The pen falls from my hand. I have been of late much indisposed. This morning's affair has hurt me not a little ——Oh! my head, my poor heart!——I feel, I feel, I shall faint—Will Heaven have no mercy on my sufferings?—I am no longer able to support myself——I will retire to my bed, and console myself in the hope of rising no more. Adieu, my only love! adieu, for the last time, my dear, my tender friend!—Ah! I live no longer for thee! have I not then already ceased to live?

LETTER CVI.

FROM ELOISA TO MRS ORBE.

CAN it be true, my dear, my cruel friend, that you have called me back to life and sorrow? I saw the happy instant when I was going to be again united to the tenderest of mothers; but your inhuman kindness has condemned me to bemoan her yet longer: when my desire to follow her had almost snatched me from this earth, my unwillingness to leave you behind held me fast. If I am at all reconciled to life, it is from the comfort of not having entirely escaped the hand of death. Thank heaven! that beauty is no more for which my heart has paid so dearly.—The distemper from which I am recovered has happily deprived me of it. This circumstance I hope will abate the gross ardour of a man so indelicate as to dare to marry me without my consent. When the only thing which he admired no longer exists, surely he will be little anxious about the rest. Without breach of promise to my father, without injuring that friend whose life is in his power, I shall be able to repulse this importunate wretch: my lips will be silent, but my looks will speak for me. His disgust will defend me against his tyranny, and he will find me too disagreeable to dare to make unhappy.

Ah! my dear cousin! you know a constant tender heart that would not be so repulsed. His passion was not confined to outward form or charms of person; it was me that he loved, and not my face; we were united in every part of our being; and so long as Eloisa had remained, her beauty might have fled, but love would for ever have continued. And yet he could consent——ungrateful youth!—yet it was but just, since I could ask it. Who would wish to retain by promise those who could withdraw their heart? and did I attempt to

withdraw mine?——have I done it!——Oh heavens! why must every thing conspire to remind me of times that are no more, and to increase a flame which ought to be extinguished? In vain, Eloisa, are thy endeavours to tear the dear image from thy heart, it is too firmly attached; that heart itself would first be torn in pieces, and all thy endeavours serve but to engrave it the deeper.

May I venture to tell you a vision of my delirium during my fever, which has continued to torment me ever since my recovery?——Yes, learn and pity the distraction of your unhappy friend, that you may thank Heaven for preserving your heart from the horrid passion by which it is occasioned. During the most violent moment of my phrenzy, when my fever was at the height, I thought I beheld the unhappy youth kneeling by my bed-side: not such as when he charmed my senses during the short period of my felicity; but pale, wild, and lost in despair. He took my hand, not disgusted with its appearance, and, fearless of the sad infection, eagerly kissed and bathed it with tears. I felt at the sight of him that pleasing emotion which his unexpected appearance used formerly to occasion. I endeavoured to dart towards him, but was restrained. You tore him from me, and what affected me most were his sighs and groans, which seemed to increase as he went farther from me.

It is impossible to describe the effect of this strange dream. My fever was long and violent; I continued many days insensible; I have seen him often in my phrenzy; but none of my dreams have left half the impression on my memory which this last did: it is impossible to drive it from my imagination. Methinks I see him every moment in that attitude. His air, his dress, his manner, his sorrowful and tender look, are continually before my eyes. His lips seem still to press my hand; I feel it wet with his tears. His plaintive voice melts

my heart; now I behold him dragged far from me, whilst I endeavour in vain to hold him fast. In short, the whole imaginary scene appears in my mind as real as if it had actually passed.

I deliberated long before I could resolve to tell you this. Shame kept me silent when we were together: but the idea grows every day stronger, and torments me to such a degree, that I can no longer conceal my folly. Would that I were entirely a fool! why should I wish to preserve that reason which serves only to make me wretched?

But to return to my dream. Rally me, my dear friend, if you will, for my simplicity; but surely there is something mysterious in this vision, which distinguishes it from common phrenzy.—Can it be a presage of his death? or is he already dead? and was it thus that Heaven deigned for once to be my guide, and invite me to follow him whom I was ordained to love? Alas! a summons to the grave would be the greatest blessing I could receive.

To what purpose do I recall these vain maxims of philosophy, which amuse only those who have no feeling? They impose on me no longer, and I cannot help despising them. I believe that spirits are invisible; but is it impossible that, between two lovers so closely united, there should be an immediate communication, independent of the body and the senses? May not their mutual impressions be transmitted through the brain?—Poor Eloisa! what extravagant ideas! how credulous are we rendered by our passions! and how difficult it is for a heart severely affected to relinquish its errors, even after conviction!

LETTER CVII.

THE ANSWER.

UNFORTUNATE and tender girl! are you then destined to be unhappy? I try in vain to keep you from sorrow, but you seem to court affliction: your evil genius is more powerful than all my endeavours. Do not, however, add chimerical apprehensions to so many real causes of inquietude; and since my caution has been more prejudicial than serviceable to you, let me free you from a mistake which aggravates your misery; perhaps the melancholy truth will be less tormenting. Know then that your dream was not a dream; that it was not the phantom of your friend which you beheld, but his real person, and that the affecting scene, which is ever present to your imagination, did actually pass in your room on the day after your disorder was at the crisis.

On the preceding day I left you very late; and Mr. Orbe, who would take me from you that night, was ready to depart; when on a sudden we perceived that unhappy wretch, whose condition is truly deplorable, enter hastily, and throw himself at our feet. He took post-horses immediately on the receipt of your last letter. By travelling day and night, he performed the journey in three days, and never stopped till the last stage; where he waited in order to enter the town under favour of the night. I am ashamed to confess, that I was less eager than Mr. Orbe to embrace him: for, without knowing the intent of his journey, I foresaw the consequence. The bitter recollection of former times, your danger and his, his manifest discomposure of mind, all contributed to check so agreeable a surprise; and I was too powerfully affected to salute him with eagerness. I nevertheless embraced him with a heart-felt emotion, in which he sympathized, and which

reciprocally displayed itself in a kind of silent grief, more eloquent than tears and lamentations. The first words he uttered were——"How does she? Oh! how is my Eloisa? am I to live or die?" I concluded from thence, that he was informed of your illness, and upon the supposition that he was likewise acquainted with the nature of it, I spoke without any other precaution than that of extenuating the danger. When he understood that it was the small-pox, he made dreadful lamentations, and was taken suddenly ill. Fatigue and the want of sleep, together with perturbation of mind, had so entirely overcome him, that it was some time before we could bring him to himself. He had scarce strength to speak; we therefore persuaded him to go to rest.

Nature being quite spent, he slept twelve hours successively, but with so much agitation, that such a sleep must rather impair than recruit his strength. The next day gave birth to new perplexity: he was absolutely determined to see you. I represented to him the danger there was that his presence might occasion some fatal revolution in your distemper. He proposed to wait till there was no risk; but his stay itself was a terrible risk, of which I endeavoured to make him sensible. He rudely interrupted me. "Cease (said he, with a tone of indignation) your cruel eloquence: it is too much to exert it for my ruin. Do not hope to drive me from hence, as you did when I was forced into exile. I would travel a hundred times from the farthest extremity of the world for one glance of my Eloisa: but I swear (added he, with vehemence) by the Author of my being, that I will not stir till I have seen her! We will try for once, whether I shall move you with compassion, or you make me guilty of perjury."

His resolution was fixed. Mr. Orbe was of opinion that we should contrive some means to gratify him, that we might send him away before his return was discovered; for he was

only known to one person in the house, of whose secrecy I was assured, and we called him by a feigned name before the family.* I promised him that he should see you the next night upon condition that he staid but a minute, that he did not utter a syllable, and that he departed the next morning before break of day. To these conditions I exacted his solemn promise; then I was easy; I left my husband with him, and returned to you.

I found you much better; the eruption was quite complete; and the physician raised my courage, by giving me hopes. I laid my plan beforehand with Bab, and the increase of your fever, though a little abated, leaving you still somewhat light-headed, I took that opportunity to dismiss every body, and send my husband word to introduce his guest, concluding that before the paroxysm of your disorder was over, you would be less likely to recollect him. We had all the difficulty in the world to get rid of your disconsolate father, who was determined to sit up with you every night. At length I told him with some warmth, that he would spare nobody the trouble of watching, for that I was determined likewise to sit up with you, and that he might be assured, though he was your father, his tenderness for you was not greater than mine. He departed with reluctance, and we remained by ourselves. Mr. Orbe came about eleven, and told me that he had left your friend in the street. I went in search of him: I took him by the hand: he trembled like a leaf. As he went through the antechamber, his strength failed him: he drew his breath with difficulty, and was forced to sit down.

* We find in the fourth part, that this feigned name was St. Preux.

At length, having singled out some objects by the faint glimmering of a distant light——"Yes, (said he, with a deep sigh,) I recollect these apartments. Once in my life I traversed them——about the same hour——with the same mysterious caution——I trembled as I do now——My heart fluttered with the same emotion——O! rash creature that I was——though but a poor mortal, I nevertheless dared to taste.——What am I now going to behold in that same spot, where every thing diffused a delight with which my soul was intoxicated? What am I going to view, in that same object which inspired and shared my transports?——The retinue of melancholy, the image of death, afflicted virtue, and expiring beauty!"

Dear cousin, I will spare your tender heart the dismal detail of such an affecting scene. He saw you, and was mute. He had promised to be silent——but such a silence! He fell upon his knees; he sobbed, and kissed the curtains of your bed; he lifted up his hands and eyes; he fetched deep and silent groans; he could scarce stifle his grief and lamentations. Without seeing him, you accidentally put one of your hands out of bed; he seized it with extravagant eagerness; the ardent kisses he impressed on your sick hand awaked you sooner than all the noise and murmur which buzzed about you. I perceived that you recollected him, and in spite of all his resistance and complaints, I forced him from your chamber directly, hoping to elude the impression of such a fleeting apparition, under the pretence of its being the effect of your delirium. But finding that you took no notice of it, I concluded that you had forgot it. I forbade Bab to mention it, and I am persuaded she has kept her word. A needless caution, which love has disconcerted, and which has only served to aggravate the pain of a recollection which it is too late to efface.

He departed as he had promised, and I made him swear not to stop in the neighbourhood.—But, my dear girl, this is not all; I must acquaint you with another circumstance, of which likewise you cannot long remain ignorant. Lord B—— passed by two days afterwards; he hastened to overtake him; he joined him at Dijon, and found him ill. The unlucky wretch had caught the small-pox. He kept it secret from me that he had never had the distemper, and I introduced him without precaution. As he could not cure your disorder, he was determined to partake of it. When I recollect the eagerness with which he kissed your hand, I make no doubt but he underwent inoculation purposely. It is impossible to have been worse prepared to receive it: but it was the inoculation of love, and it proved fortunate. The Author of life preserved the most tender lover that ever existed; he is recovered, and according to my Lord's last letter, they are actually by this time set out for Paris.

You see, my too lovely cousin, that you ought to banish those melancholy terrors which alarm you without reason. You have long since renounced the person of your friend, and you find that his life is safe. Think of nothing, therefore, but how to preserve your own, and how to make the promised sacrifice to paternal affection with becoming grace. Cease to be the sport of vain hope, and to feed yourself with chimeras. You are in great haste to be proud of your deformity; let me advise you to be more humble; believe me, you have yet too much reason to be so. You have undergone a cruel infection, but it has spared your face. What you take for seams, is nothing but a redness which will quickly disappear. I was worse affected than you, yet nevertheless you see I am tolerable.—My angel, you will still be beautiful in spite of yourself; and do you think that the enamoured Wolmar, who in three years absence could not conquer a

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passion conceived in eight days, is likely to be cured of it, when he has an opportunity of seeing you every hour? Oh! if your only resource is the hope of being disagreeable, how desperate is your condition!

LETTER XCIV.

FROM ELOISA.

It is too much! It is too much! O my friend! the victory is yours. I am not proof against such powerful love; my resolution is exhausted. My conscience affords me the consolatory testimony, that I have exerted my utmost efforts. Heaven, I hope, will not call me to account for more than it has bestowed upon me. This sorrowful heart, which cost you so dear, and which you have more than purchased, is yours without reserve; it was attached to you the first moment my eyes beheld you; and it will remain yours to my dying breath. You have too much deserved it ever to be in danger of losing it; and I am weary of being the slave of a chimerical virtue at the expence of justice.

Yes, my most tender and generous lover, your Eloisa will be ever yours, will love you ever; I must, I will, I ought. To you I resign the empire which love has given you; a dominion of which nothing shall ever deprive you more. The deceitful voice which murmurs at the bottom of my soul, whispers in vain: it shall no longer betray me. What are the vain duties it prescribes in opposition to a passion which Heaven itself inspired? Is not the obligation which binds me to you the most solemn of all? Is it not to you alone that I have given an absolute promise? Was not the first vow of my heart never to forget you? and is not your inviolable attach-

ment a fresh tie to secure my constancy? In the transports of love with which I once more surrender my heart to thee, my only regret is, that I have struggled against sentiments so agreeable and so natural. Nature, O gentle nature, resume thy rights! I abjure the savage virtues which conspire to thy destruction. Can the inclinations which thou hast inspired be more seductive than a specious reason which has so often misled me?

O my dear friend, have some regard for the tenderness of my inclinations; you are too much indebted to them to abhor them; but allow of a participation which nature and affection demand; let not the rights of blood and friendship be totally extinguished by those of love. Do not imagine that to follow you I will ever quit my father's house. Do not hope that I will refuse to comply with the obligations imposed on me by parental authority. The cruel loss of one of the authors of my being has taught me to be cautious how I afflict the other. No, she whom he expects to be his only comfort hereafter will not increase the affliction of his soul, already oppressed with disquietude: I will not destroy all that gave me life. No, no, I am sensible of my crime, but cannot abhor it. Duty, honour, virtue, all these considerations have lost their influence, but yet I am not a monster: I am frail, but not unnatural. I am determined I will not grieve any of the objects of my affection. Let a father, tenacious of his word, and jealous of a vain prerogative, dispose of my hand according to his promise; but let love alone dispose of my heart; let my tears incessantly trickle down the bosom of my tenderest friend. Let me be lost and wretched, but, if possible, let every one dear to me be happy and contented. On you three my existence depends, and may your felicity make me forget my misery and despair!

LETTER CIX.

THE ANSWER.

We revive, my Eloisa; all the real sentiments of our souls resume their wonted course. Nature has preserved our existence, and love has restored us to life. Did you suppose, could you be rash enough to imagine, you could withdraw your affections from me? I am better acquainted with your heart than yourself: that heart which Heaven destined to be mine! I find we are united by one common thread, which death alone can divide. Is it in our power to separate them, or ought we even to attempt it? are they joined together by ties which man hath formed, and which man can dissolve? No, no, my Eloisa! if cruel destiny bars our claim to tender conjugal titles, yet nothing can deprive us of the character of faithful lovers; that shall be the comfort of our melancholy days, and we will carry it with us to the grave.

Thus, we recover life only to renew our sufferings, and the consciousness of our existence is nothing more than a sense of affliction. Unfortunate beings! how are we altered! how have we ceased to be what we were formerly! Where is that enchantment of supreme felicity? Where are those exquisite raptures which enlivened our passion? Nothing is left of us but our love; love alone remains, and all its charms are eclipsed. O thou dear and too dutiful girl, thou fond fair-one without resolution! all our misfortunes are derived from thy errors. Alas! a heart of less purity would not have so fatally misled thee! yes, the honour of your heart has been our ruin; the upright sentiments which fill thy breast have banished discretion. You would endeavour to reconcile filial tenderness with unconquerable love; by tempting to gratify all your inclinations, you confound in-

stead of conciliating them, and your very virtue renders you guilty. O Eloisa, how incredible is your power! by what strange magic do you fascinate my reason! Even while you endeavour to make me blush at our passion, you have the art to appear amiable in your very failings. You force me to admire you, even while I partake of your remorse——your remorse!——does it become you to feel remorse?——you, whom I loved——you, whom I shall never cease to adore——Can guilt ever approach your spotless heart?——O cruel Eloisa! if you mean to restore the heart which belongs to me alone, return it to me such as it was when you first bestowed it.

What do you tell me?—will you venture to intimate—you fall into the arms of another?—shall another possess you?—will you be no longer mine?—or to complete my horror, will you not be solely mine?—I—shall I suffer such dreadful punishment?—shall I see you survive yourself?—No; I had rather lose you entirely than share you with another.—Why has not Heaven armed me with courage equal to the rage which distracts me?—Sooner than thy hand should debase itself by a fatal union which love abhors, and honour condemns, I would interpose my own, and plunge a poniard in thy breast. I would drain thy chaste heart of blood which infidelity never tainted; with that spotless blood I would mix my own, which burns in my veins with unextinguishable ardour; I would fall in thy arms; I would yield my last breath on thy lips—I would receive thine—How! Eloisa expiring! those lovely eyes closed by the horrors of death!—that breast, the throne of love, mangled by my hand, and pouring forth copious streams of blood and life!—No; live and suffer, endure the punishment of my cowardice. No, I wish thou wert no more, but my passion is not so violent as to stab thee. Oh! that you did but know the state of my

heart, which is ready to burst with anguish! Never did it burn with so pure a flame—never were your innocence and virtue so dear to me. I am a lover, I know how to prize an amiable object; I am sensible that I do: but I am no more than man, and it is not in human power to renounce supreme felicity. One night, one single night has made a thorough change in my soul. Preserve me, if thou canst, from that dangerous recollection, and I am virtuous still. But the remembrance of that fatal night is sunk to the bottom of my soul, and will darken all the rest of my days. O Eloisa, thou most adorable object! if we must be wretched for ever, yet let us enjoy one hour of transport, and then resign ourselves to eternal lamentations.

Listen to the man who loves you. Why should we alone affect to be wiser than the rest of mankind, and pursue, with puerile simplicity, those chimerical virtues which all the world talk of, and no one practises?—What! shall we pretend to be greater moralists than the crowd of philosophers which people London and Paris, who all laugh at conjugal fidelity, and treat adultery as a jest? Instances of this nature are far from being scandalous: we are not at liberty even to censure them, and people of spirit would laugh at a man who should stifle the affections of his heart out of respect to matrimony. In fact, say they, an injury which only consists in opinion, is no injury while it remains secret. What injury does a husband receive from an infidelity to which he is a stranger? by how many obliging condescensions does a woman compensate for her failings*? What endearments she employs to prevent and

* Where did the honest Swiss learn this? Women of gaiety have long since assumed more imperious airs. They begin by boldly introducing their lovers into the house, and if they permit their husbands to continue there, it is only while they behave to-

remove his suspicions! Deprived of an imaginary good, he actually enjoys more real felicity; and this supposed crime, which makes such a noise, is but an additional tie, which secures the peace of society.

O God forbid, thou dear partner of my soul, that I should wish to preserve thy affections by such shameful maxims! I abhor them, though I am not able to confute them, and my conscience is a better advocate than my reason. Not that I pride myself upon a spirit which I detest, or that I am fond of a virtue bought so dear: but I think it less criminal to reproach myself with my failings, than to attempt to vindicate them; and I consider an endeavour to stifle remorse as the strongest degree of guilt.

I know what I write. I find my mind in a horrid state, much worse than it was, even before I received your letter. The hope you tender me is gloomy and melancholy; it totally extinguishes that pure light which has so often been our guide: your charms are blasted, and yet appear more affecting: I perceive that you are affectionate and unhappy; my heart is overwhelmed with the tears which flow from your eyes, and I vent bitter reproaches on myself, for having presumed to taste a happiness which I can no longer enjoy but at the hazard of your peace.

Nevertheless, I perceive that a secret ardour fires my soul, and revives that courage which my remorse has subdued. Ah! lovely Eloisa! do you know how many losses a love like mine can compensate? Do you know how far a lover, who

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wards them with a proper respect. A woman who should take pains to conceal a criminal intrigue, would show that she was ashamed and would be despised; not one female of spirit would take notice of her.

only breathes for you, can make your life agreeable? are you sensible that it is for you alone I wish to live, to move, to think? No, thou delicious source of my existence, I will have no soul but thine, I will no longer be any thing but a part of thy lovely self, and you will meet with such a kind reception in the inmost recesses of my heart, that you will never perceive any decay in your charms. Well, we shall be guilty, yet we will not be wicked; we shall be guilty, yet we will be in love with virtue: so far from attempting to palliate our failings, we will deplore them; we will lament together; if possible, we will work our redemption by being good and benevolent. Eloisa! O Eloisa, what will you, what can you do? thou canst never disengage thyself from my heart: is it not espoused to thine?

I have long since bid adieu to those vain prospects of fortune which so palpably deluded me. I now solely confine my attention to the duties I owe Lord B——; he will force me with him to England; he imagines I can be of service to him there. Well, I will attend him. But I will steal away once every year; I will come in secret to visit you: if I cannot speak to you, at least I shall have the pleasure of gazing on you; I may at least kiss your footsteps; one glance from your eyes will support me ten months. When I am forced to return, and retire from her I love, it will be some consolation to me to count the steps which will bring me back again. These frequent journeys will be some amusement to your unhappy lover: when he sets out to visit you, he will anticipate the pleasure of beholding you; the remembrance of the transports he has felt will enchant his imagination during his absence; in spite of his cruel destiny, his melancholy time will not be utterly lost; every year will be marked with some tincture of pleasure, and the short-lived moments he passes near you will be multiplied during his whole life.

LETTER CX.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

YOUR mistress is no more; but I have recovered my friend, and you too have gained one, whose affection will more than recompense your loss. Eloisa is married, and her merit is sufficient to make the gentleman happy who has blended his interest with hers. After so many indiscretions, you ought to thank Heaven, which has preserved you both, her from ignominy, and you from the regret of having dishonoured her. Reverence her change of condition; do not write to her; she desires you will not. Wait till she writes to you, which she will shortly do. Now is the time to convince me that you merit that esteem I have entertained for you, and that your heart is susceptible of a pure and disinterested friendship.

LETTER CXI.

FROM ELOISA.

I HAVE been so long accustomed to make you the confidant of all the secrets of my soul, that it is not in my power to discontinue so agreeable a correspondence. In the most important occurrences of life I long to disclose my heart to you. Open yours, my beloved friend, to receive what I communicate; treasure up in your mind the long discourse of friendship, which though it sometimes renders the speaker too diffusive, always makes the friendly hearer patient.

Attached to the fortune of a husband, or rather to the will of a parent, by an indissoluble tie, I enter upon a new state

of life, which death alone can terminate: let us for a moment cast our eyes on that I have quitted: the recollection of former times cannot be painful to us. Perhaps it will afford some lessons, which will teach me how to make a proper use of the time to come: perhaps it will open some lights which may serve to explain those particulars of my conduct, which always appeared mysterious in your eyes. At least, by reflecting on the relation in which we lately stood to each other, our hearts will become more sensible of the reciprocal obligations from which death alone can release us.

It is now near six years since I first saw you. You was young, genteel, and agreeable; I had seen others more comely, and more engaging; but no one ever excited in me the least emotion, and my heart surrendered itself to you on the first interview*. I imagined that I saw in your countenance the traces of a soul which seemed the counterpart of mine. I thought that my senses only served as organs to more refined sentiments; and I loved in you not so much what I saw, as what I imagined I felt within myself. It is not two months since, that I still flattered myself I was not mistaken: Blind love (said I) was in the right; we were made for each other, if human events do not interrupt the affinity of nature; and if we are allowed to enjoy felicity in this life, we shall certainly be happy together.

These sentiments were reciprocal: I should have been deceived had I entertained them alone. The love I felt, could not arise but from a mutual conformity and harmony of souls.

* Mr. Richardson makes a jest of these attachments formed at first sight, and founded on an unaccountable congeniality of nature. It is easy to laugh at these attachments: but as too many of this kind take place; instead of entertaining ourselves with controverting them, would it not be better to teach us how to conquer them?

We never love unless we are beloved; at least our passion is short-lived. Those affections which meet with no return, and which are supposed to make so many wretched, are only founded on sensuality: if ever they penetrate the heart, it is by means of some false resemblance, and the mistake is quickly discovered. Sensual love cannot subsist without fruition, and dies with it: the sublimer passion cannot be satisfied without engaging the heart, and is as permanent as the analogy which gave it birth*. Such was ours from the beginning; and such, I hope, it will ever be to the end of our days. I perceived, I felt that I was beloved, and that I merited your affection. My lips were silent, my looks were constrained; but my heart explained itself: we quickly experienced I know not what, which renders silence eloquent, which gives utterance to the downcast eye, which occasions a kind of forward bashfulness, which discovers the tumult of desire through the veil of timidity, and conveys ideas which it dares not express.

I perceived the situation of my heart, and gave myself over for lost the first word you spoke. I found what pain your reserve cost you. I approved of the distance you observed, and admired you the more; I endeavoured to recompense you for such a necessary and painful silence, without prejudice to my innocence; I offered violence to my natural disposition; I imitated my cousin; I became like her arch and lively, to avoid too serious explanations, and to indulge a thousand tender caresses, under cover of that affected sprightliness. I took such pains to make your situation agreeable, that the apprehensions of a change increased your reserve. This scheme turned to my disadvantage: we gene-

* Admitting the analogy to be chimerical, yet it lasts as long as the illusion, which makes us suppose it real.

ally suffer for assuming a borrowed character. Fool that I was! I accelerated my ruin, instead of preventing it: I employed poison as a palliative; and what should have induced you to preserve silence, was the occasion which tempted you to explain yourself.—In vain did I attempt, by an affected indifference, to keep you at a distance in our private interviews; that very constraint betrayed me: you wrote. Instead of committing your first letter to the fire, or delivering it to my mother, I ventured to open it. That was my original crime, and all the rest was a necessary consequence of that first fault. I endeavoured to avoid answering those fatal letters, which I could not forbear reading. This violent struggle affected my health. I saw the abyss in which I was going to plunge. I looked upon myself with horror, and could not resolve to endure your absence. I fell into a kind of despair; I had rather that you had ceased to live than not to live for me. I even went so far as to wish, and to desire your death. Heaven knew my heart; these efforts may make amends for some failings.

Finding you disposed to implicit obedience, I was determined to speak. Challiot had given me some instructions, which made me too sensible of the danger of avowing my passion. But love, which extorted the confession, taught me to elude its consequence. You were my last resort; I had such an entire confidence in you, that I furnished you with arms against my weakness: such was my opinion of your integrity, that I trusted you would preserve me from myself, and I did you no more than justice. When I found the respect you paid to so valuable a trust, I perceived that my passion had not blinded me in my opinion of those virtues with which I suppose you endowed. I resigned myself with greater security, as I imagined that we should both of us be contented with a sentimental affection. As I discovered nothing

at the bottom of my heart but sentiments of honour, I tasted without reserve the charms of such a delightful intimacy. Alas! I did not perceive that my disorder grew inveterate from inattention, and that habit was still more dangerous than love.—Being sensibly affected by your reserve, I thought I might relax mine without any risk; in the innocence of my desires I hoped to lead you to the heights of virtue, by the tender caresses of friendship. But the grove of Clarens soon convinced me that I trusted myself too far, and that we ought not to grant the least indulgence to the senses, where prudence forbids us to gratify them entirely. One moment, one single moment, fired me with a desire which nothing could extinguish; and if my will yet resisted, my heart was from that time corrupted.

You partook of my distraction; your letter made me tremble. The danger was double: to preserve me from you and from myself, it was necessary to banish you. This was the last effort of expiring virtue; but by your flight, you made your conquest sure; and when I saw you no more, the languor your absence occasioned, deprived me of the little strength I had left to resist you.

When my father quitted the service, he brought M. Wolmar home with him. His life, which he owed to him, and an intimacy of twenty years, rendered this friend so dear, that he could never part from him. M. Wolmar was advanced in years, and though of high birth, had met with no woman who had fixed his affections. My father mentioned me to him, as to a man whom he wished to call his son: he was desirous to see me, and it was with this intent they came together. It was my fate to be agreeable to him, who never was susceptible of any impression before.

They entered into secret engagements, and M. Wolmar, who had some affairs to settle in one of the northern courts,

where his family and fortune were, desired time, and took leave upon their mutual engagement. After his departure, my father acquainted my mother and me, that he designed him for my husband; and commanded me, with a tone which cut off all reply from my timidity, to prepare myself to receive his hand. My mother, who too plainly perceived the inclinations of my heart, and who had a natural liking for you, made several attempts to shake my father's resolution; she durst not absolutely propose you, but she spoke of you in such terms as she hoped might make my father esteem you, and wish to be acquainted with you; but your rank in life made him insensible to all your accomplishments; and though he allowed that high birth could not supply them, yet he maintained that birth alone could make them of any value.

The impossibility of being happy fanned the flame which it ought to have extinguished. A flattering delusion had supported me under all my troubles; when that was gone, I had no strength to oppose them. While I had the least hope of being yours, I might have triumphed over my inclinations; it would have cost me less to have spent my whole life in resistance, than to renounce you for ever; and the very idea of an everlasting opposition deprived me of fortitude to subdue my passion.

Grief and love preyed upon my heart; I fell into a state of dejection which you might perceive in my letters; yours, which you wrote to me from Meillerie, completed my affliction: to the measure of my own troubles was added the sense of your despair. Alas! the weakest mind is always destined to bear the troubles of both. The scheme you ventured to propose to me put the finishing stroke to my perplexity. Misery seemed to be the infallible lot of my days; the inevitable choice which remained for me to make was, to add to it either your infelicity or that of my parents. I

could not endure the horrible alternative; the power of nature has its bounds; such agitations overpowered my strength. I wished to be delivered from life. Heaven seemed to take pity of me; but cruel death spared me for my destruction. I saw you, I recovered, and was undone.

If my failings did not contribute to my felicity, I was not disappointed: I never considered them as the means to procure happiness. I perceived that my heart was formed for virtue, without which I could never be happy; I fell through weakness, not from error; I had not even blindness to plead in excuse for my frailty. I was bereaved of every hope; it was impossible for me to be otherwise than unfortunate. Innocence and love were equally requisite to my peace; as I could not preserve them both, and was witness to your distraction, I consulted your interest alone in the choice I made; and, to save you, ruined myself.

But it is not so easy as many imagine, to forsake virtue. She continues for some time to torment those who abandon her; and her charms, which are the delight of refined souls, constitute the chief punishment of the wicked, who are condemned to be in love with her when they can no longer enjoy her. Guilty, yet not depraved, I could not escape the remorse which pursued me; honour was dear to me, even after it was gone; though my shame was secret, it was not less grievous, and though the whole world had been witness to it, I could not have been more sensibly affected. I comforted myself under my affliction, like one who, having a wound, dreads a mortification; and who, by the sense of pain, is encouraged not to despair of a cure.

Nevertheless, my shameful state was insupportable. By endeavouring to stifle the reproach of guilt, without renouncing the crime, I experienced what every honest mind feels when it goes astray, and is fond of its mistake. A new de-

lusion lent its aid to assuage the bitterness of repentance; I flattered myself, that my frailty would afford me the means of repairing my indiscretion, and ventured to form a design of forcing my father to unite our hands. I depended on the first pledge of our love to close this delightful union. I prayed to Heaven for offspring, as the pledge of my return to virtue, and of our mutual happiness: I wished for it with as much earnestness as another, in my place, would have dreaded it. The tenderness of love, by its soft illusion, allayed the murmurs of my conscience; the effects I hoped to derive from my frailty inspired me with consolation, and this pleasing expectation was all the hope and comfort of my life.

Whenever I should discover evident symptoms of my pregnancy, I was determined to make a public declaration of my condition to M. Perret*, in the presence of the whole family. I am timorous, it is true; I was sensible how dear such a declaration would cost me; but honour itself inspired me with courage, and I chose rather to bear at once the confusion I deserved, than to nourish everlasting infamy at the bottom of my soul. I knew that my father would either doom me to death, or give me to my lover; this alternative had nothing in it terrible to my apprehension, and whatever might be the event, I concluded that this step would put an end to all my sufferings.

This, my dear friend, was the mystery which I concealed from you, and which you endeavoured to penetrate with such solicitous curiosity. A thousand reasons conspired to make me use this reserve with a man of your impetuosity, not to mention that it would have been imprudent to have furnished you with a new pretence for pressing your indiscreet and im-

* Minister of the parish.

portunate application. It was above all things requisite to remove you during such a perilous situation, and I was very sensible that you would never have consented to leave me in such an extremity, had you known my danger.

Alas! I was once more deceived by such a flattering expectation. Heaven refused to favour designs which were conceived in wickedness. I did not deserve the honour of being a mother; my scheme, was abortive and I was even deprived of an opportunity of expiating my frailty at the expence of my reputation. Disappointed in my hope, the indiscreet assignation, which exposed your life to danger, was a rashness which my fond love coloured with this gentle palliation: I imputed the ill success of my wishes to myself; and my heart, misled by its desires, flattered itself that its eagerness to gratify them arose entirely from my anxiety to render them lawful hereafter.

At one time, I thought my wishes accomplished: that mistake was the source of my most bitter affliction; and after nature had granted the petition of love, the stroke of destiny came with aggravated cruelty. You know the accident which destroyed my last hopes, together with the fruit of my love. That misfortune happened during our separation, as if Heaven at that time intended to oppress me with all the evils I merited, and to separate me at once from every connection which might contribute to our union.

Your departure put an end to my delusion and to my pleasures; I discovered, but too late, the chimeras which had imposed upon me. I perceived that I had fallen into a state truly despicable, and felt myself completely wretched; which was the inevitable consequence of love without innocence, and hopeless desires which I could never extinguish. Tortured by a thousand fruitless griefs, I stifled reflections which were as painful as unprofitable; I no longer looked

upon myself as worthy of consideration, and devoted my life to solitude for you: I had no honour, but yours; no hope, but in your happiness; and the sentiments which you communicated were alone capable of affecting me.

Love did not make me blind to your faults, but it made those faults dear to me; and its delusion was so powerful, that had you been more perfect, I should have loved you less. I was no stranger to your heart, or your impetuosity of temper. I was sensible, that with more courage than I, you had less patience, and that the afflictions which oppressed my soul, would drive yours to despair. It was for this reason I always carefully kept my father's promise a secret from you; and at our parting, taking advantage of Lord B——'s zeal for your interest, and with a view to make you more attentive to your own welfare, flattered you with a hope which I myself did not entertain. Yet more; apprised of the danger which threatened us, I took the only precaution for our mutual security, and, by a solemn engagement, having made you, as much as possible, master of my will, I hoped to inspire you with confidence, and myself with fortitude, by means of a promise which I never durst violate, and which might ensure your peace of mind. I own it was a needless obligation, and yet I should never have infringed it. Virtue is so essential to our souls, that when we have once abandoned that which is real, we presently fashion another after the same model, and keep the more strongly attached to this substitute, because, perhaps, it is of our own election.

I need not tell you what perturbation I felt after your departure. The worst of my apprehensions was the dread of being forsaken. The place of your residence made me tremble.—Your manner of living increased my terror; I imagined that I already saw you debased into a man of in-

trigue. An ignominy of this nature touched me more sensibly than all my afflictions; I had rather have seen you wretched than contemptible; after so many troubles to which I had been inured, your dishonour was the only one I could not support.

My apprehensions, which the style of your letters confirmed, were quickly removed; and that by such means as would have made any other completely uneasy. I allude to the disorderly course of life into which you was seduced, and of which your ready and frank confession was, of all the proofs of your sincerity, that which affected me most sensibly. I knew you too well to be ignorant what such a confession must have cost you, even if I had been no longer dear to you. I perceived that love alone had triumphed over shame, and extorted it from you. I concluded that a heart so sincere was incapable of disguised infidelity; I discovered less guilt in your failing, than merit in the confession; and calling to mind your former engagements, was entirely cured of jealousy.

And yet, my worthy friend, my cure did not increase my felicity; for one torment less, a thousand others rose up incessantly, and I was never more sensible of the folly of seeking that repose in an unsettled mind, which nothing but prudence can bestow. I had, for a long time, secretly lamented the best of mothers, who insensibly wasted by a fatal decay. Bab, whom the unhappy consequence of my misconduct obliged me to make my confidant, betrayed me, and discovered our mutual love and my frailty to my mother. I had just received your letters from my cousin when they were seized. The proofs were too convincing; grief deprived her of the little strength her illness had left her. I thought I should have expired at her feet with remorse. So far from consigning me to the death I merited, she concealed

my shame, and was contented to bemoan my fall. Even you, who had so ungratefully abused her kindness, was not odious to her. I was witness to the effect which your letter produced on her tender and affectionate mind. Alas! she wished for your happiness and mine. She attempted more than once —but why should I recall a hope which is now for ever extinguished? Heaven decreed it otherwise. She closed her melancholy days with the afflicting consideration of being unable to move a rigid husband, and of leaving a daughter behind her so little worthy of such a parent.

Oppressed with such a cruel loss, my soul had no other strength than what it received from that impression: the voice of nature uttered groans which stifled the murmurs of love. I regarded the author of my troubles with a kind of horror. I endeavoured to stifle the detestable passion which had brought them upon me, and to renounce you for ever. This, no doubt, was what I ought to have done: had I not sufficient cause of lamentation the remainder of my days, without being in continual quest of new subjects of affliction? Every thing seemed to favour my resolution. If melancholy softens the mind, deep affliction hardens it. The remembrance of my dying mother effaced your image; we were distant from each other; hope had entirely abandoned me; my incomparable friend was never more great or more deserving wholly to engross my heart. Her virtue, her discretion, her friendship, her tender caresses, seemed to have purified it; I thought I had forgotten you, and imagined myself cured. But it was too late; what I took for the indifference of extinguished love was nothing but the heaviness of despair.

As a sick man, who falls into a weak state when free from pain, is suddenly revived by more acute sensations, so I quickly perceived all my troubles renewed when my father acquainted me with M. Wolmar's approaching return. Invin-

cible love then gave me incredible strength. For the first time, I ventured to oppose my father to his face. I frankly protested that I could never like M. Wolmar; that I was determined to die single; that he was master of my life, but not of my affections, and that nothing could ever make me alter my resolution. I need not describe the rage he was in, nor the treatment I was obliged to endure. I was immoveable: my timidity once vanquished, carried me to the other extreme, and if my tone was less imperious than my father's, it was nevertheless equally resolute.

He found that I was determined, and that he should make no impression on me by dint of authority. For a minute I thought myself freed from his persecution. But what became of me, when on a sudden I saw the most rigid father softened into tears, and prostrate at my feet! Without suffering me to rise, he embraced my knees, and fixing his streaming eyes on mine, he addressed himself to me in a plaintive voice, which still murmurs in my ears. "O my child! have some respect for the grey hairs of your unhappy father; do not send me with sorrow to the grave, after her who bore thee. Will Eloisa be the death of all her family?"

Imagine my grief and astonishment. That attitude, that tone, that gesture, those words, that horrible idea, overpowered me to that degree, that I dropped half dead into his arms, and it was not till after repeated sobs, which for some time stifled utterance, that I was able to answer him in a faint and faltering voice: "O my father, I was armed against your menaces, but I am not proof against your tears. You will be the death of your daughter."

We were both of us in such violent agitation, that it was a long while before we recovered. In the mean time, recollecting his last words, I concluded that he was better informed of the particulars of my conduct than I had imagined,

and being resolved to turn those circumstances of information against him, I was preparing, at the hazard of my life, to make a confession which I had too long deferred, when he hastily interrupted me, and, as if he had foreseen and dreaded what I was going to declare, spoke to me in the following terms:

"I know you have encouraged inclinations unworthy a "girl of your birth. It is time to sacrifice to duty and "honour a shameful passion, which you shall never gratify "but at the expence of my life. Attend to what your fa- "ther's honour, and your own, require of you, and then "determine for yourself.

"M. Wolmar is of noble extraction, one who is dis- "tinguished by all the accomplishments requisite to maintain "his dignity; one who enjoys the public esteem, and who "deserves it. I am indebted to him for my life; and you "are no stranger to the engagement I have concluded with "him: you are further to understand, that, on his return "home to settle his concerns, he found himself involved by "an unfortunate turn of affairs: he had lost the greatest "part of his estate, and it was by singular good luck that "he himself escaped from exile to Siberia: he is coming "back with the melancholy wreck of his fortune, upon the "strength of his friend's word, which never yet was for- "feited. Tell me, now, in what manner I shall receive him "on his return? Shall I say to him, Sir, I promised you "my daughter while you were in affluent circumstances, but "now your fortune is ruined, I must retract my word, for "my daughter will never be your's! If I do not express my "refusal in these words, it will be interpreted in this manner. "To allege your pre-engagement will be considered as a "pretence, or it will be imputed as an additional disgrace "to me, and we shall pass, you for an abandoned girl, and

"I for a dishonest man, who has sacrificed his word and "honour to sordid interest, and has added ingratitude to "infidelity. My dear child, I have lived too long now to "close an unblemished life with infamy, and sixty years "spent with honour are not to be prostituted in a quarter "of an hour.

"You perceive, therefore, (continued he,) how unreason-"able is every objection which you can offer. Judge whether "the giddy passion of youth, whether the attachments which "modesty disavows, are to be put in competition with the "duty of a child, and the honour by which a parent stands "bound. If the dispute were, which of us should fall a "victim to the happiness of the other, my tenderness would "challenge the right of making that sacrifice to affection; "but honour, my child, calls upon me, and that always de-"termines the resolution of him whose blood you inherit."

I was not without a pertinent answer to these remonstrances; but my father's prejudices confirmed him in his principles, so different from mine, that reasons, which appeared to me unanswerable, would not have had the least weight with him. Besides, not knowing whence he had gathered the intelligence he seemed to have gained with respect to my conduct, or how far his information extended; apprehending likewise, by his eagerness to interrupt me, that he had formed his resolution with regard to the matter I was going to communicate; and above all, being restrained by a sense of shame which I could never subdue, I rather chose to avail myself of an excuse, which I thought would have greater weight, as it squared more with my father's peculiarity of thinking. I, therefore, made a frank declaration of the engagement I had made with you: I protested that I would never be false to my word, and that, whatever was the consequence, I would never marry without your consent.

In truth, I was delighted to find that my scruples did not offend him; he reproached me severely for entering into such an engagement, but he made no objection to its validity. So exalted are the ideas which a gentleman of honour naturally entertains with regard to the faith of engagements, and so sacred a thing does he esteem a promise! Instead of attempting, therefore, to dispute the force of my obligation to you, he made me write a note, which he enclosed in a letter, and sent away directly*. With what agitation did I expect your answer! How often did I wish that you might shew less delicacy than you ought! but I knew you too well, however, to doubt your compliance, and was sensible that the more painful you felt the sacrifice required of you, the readier you would be to undergo it.

Your answer came; it was kept a secret from me during my illness; after my recovery, my fears were confirmed, and I was cut off from all further excuses. At least, my father declared he would admit of no more; and the dreadful expression he had made use of gave him such an ascendancy over my will, that he made me swear never to say any thing to M. Wolmar which might make him averse from marrying me; for, he added, that will appear to him like a trick concerted between us, and at all events the marriage must be concluded.

You know, my dear friend, that my constitution, which is strong enough to endure fatigue and inclemency of weather, is not able to resist the violence of passion, and that too exquisite a sensibility is the source of all the evils which have afflicted my mind and body. Whether continued grief had tainted my blood, or whether nature took that opportunity to purify it from the fatal effects of fermentation, however it

* See page 88 of the present volume.

was, I found myself violently disordered at the end of our conversation. When I left my father's room, I endeavoured to write a line to you, but found myself so ill, that I was obliged to go to bed, from whence I hoped never to rise. You are too well acquainted with the rest. My imprudence led you to indiscretion. You came, I saw you, and thought that I had only beheld you in one of those dreams, which during my delirium so often presented your image before me. But when I found that you had really been there, that I had actually seen you, that being resolved to partake of my distemper, which you could not cure, you had purposely caught the infection, I could no longer resist this last proof; and finding that the tenderness of your affection survived even hope itself, my love, which I had taken such pains to smother, instantly broke through all restraint, and revived with more ardour than ever. I perceived that I was doomed to love in spite of myself; I was sensible that I must be guilty; that I could neither resist my father nor my love, and that I could never reconcile the rights of love and consanguinity, but at the expence of honour. Thus, all my noble sentiments were utterly extinguished; all my faculties were altered; guilt was no longer horrible in my sight; I felt a thorough change within me; at length the unruly transports of a passion, rendered impetuous by opposition, threw me into the most dismal dejection with which human nature was ever oppressed; I even dared to despair of virtue. Your letter, which was rather calculated to awaken remorse than to stifle it, put the finishing stroke to my distraction. My heart was so far depraved, that my reason could not withstand the arguments of your plausible philosophy. Such horrible ideas crowded into my mind, as it had never been tainted with before. My will still opposed them, but my imagination grew familiar with them, and if my soul did not harbour anticipated guilt,

yet I was no longer mistress of that noble resolution which alone is capable of resisting temptation.

I am scarce able to proceed. Let me stop a while. Recall to your mind those days of innocence and felicity, when the lively and tender passion with which we were mutually animated, only served to refine our sentiments; when that holy ardour contributed to render modesty more lovely, and honour more amiable; when our very desires seemed kindled only that we might have the glory of subduing them, and of rendering ourselves more worthy of each other. Look over our first letters; reflect on those moments so fleeting and so little enjoyed, when love appeared to us arrayed in all the charms of virtue, and when we were too fond of each other to enter into any connections which she condemned.

What were we then, and what are we now? Two tender lovers spent a whole year together in painful silence; they scarce ventured to breathe a sigh, but their hearts understood each other; they thought their sufferings great, but, had they known it, they were happy. Their mutual silence was so intelligible, that at length they ventured to converse; but, satisfied with the power of triumphing over their inclinations, and with giving each other the glorious proofs of their victory, they passed another year in a reserve scarce less severe; they imparted their troubles to each other, and were happy. But these violent struggles were too painful to be supported long; one moment's weakness led them astray; they forgot themselves in their transports; but if they were no longer chaste, they were still constant; at least Heaven and nature authorized the ties which united them; at least virtue was still dear to them; they still loved and honoured her charms; they were less corrupted than debased. Though they were less worthy of felicity, they still continued happy.

What now are those affectionate lovers who glowed with

so refined a passion, and were so sensible of the worth of honour? Who can be acquainted with their condition, without sighing over them?—Behold them a prey to guilt. Even the idea of defiling the marriage-bed does not now strike them with horror—they meditate adultery!—How! is it possible that they can be the same pair? Are not their souls entirely altered? How could that lovely image, which the wicked never behold, be effaced in the minds where it once shone so bright? Are not they, who have once tasted of the charms of virtue, for ever after disgusted with vice? How many ages have passed to produce this astonishing alteration? What length of time could be capable of destroying so delighted a remembrance, and of extinguishing the true sense of happiness in those who had once enjoyed it? Alas! if the first step of irregularity moves with slow and painful pace, how easy and precipitate are those which follow! How great is the illusion of passion! It is that which fascinates reason, betrays prudence, and new-models nature before we perceive the change. A single moment leads us astray; a single step draws us out of the right path. From that time an irresistible propensity hurries us on to our ruin. From that time we fall into a gulf, and arise frightened to find ourselves oppressed with crimes, with hearts formed for virtue. My dear friend, let us drop the curtain. Can it be necessary to see the dangerous precipice it conceals from us, in order to avoid approaching it?—I resume my narrative.

M. Wolmar arrived, and made no objection to the alteration in my features. My father pressed me. The mourning for my mother was just over, and my grief was proof against time. I could form no pretence to elude my promise; and was under a necessity of fulfilling it. I thought the day which was to separate me for ever from you and from myself, would have been the last of my life. I could have beheld the

preparations for my funeral with less horror than those for my marriage. The nearer the fatal moment drew, the less I found myself able to root out my first affections from my soul; my efforts rather served to inflame than extinguish them. At length I gave over the fruitless struggle. At the very time that I was prepared to swear eternal constancy to another, my heart still vowed eternal love to thee; and I was carried to the temple as a polluted victim, which defiles the altar on which it is sacrificed.

When I came to the church, I felt at my entrance a kind of emotion which I had never experienced before. An inconceivable terror seized my mind in that solemn and august place, which was full of the Being worshipped there. A sudden horror made me shiver. Trembling, and ready to faint, it was with difficulty I reached the altar. Far from being composed, I found my disorder increase during the ceremony, and every object I beheld struck me with terror. The gloomy light of the temple, and profound silence of the spectators, their decent and collected deportment, the train of all my relations, the awful look of my venerable father, all contributed to give the ceremony an air of solemnity, which commanded my attention and reverence, and which made me tremble at the very thought of perjury. I imagined that I beheld the instrument of Providence, and that I heard the voice of Heaven in the minister, who pronounced the holy liturgy with uncommon solemnity. The purity, the dignity, the sanctity of marriage, so forcibly expressed in the words of Scripture, the chaste, the sublime duties it inculcates, and which are so important to the happiness, the order, the peace, the being of human nature, so agreeable in themselves to be observed, all conspired to make such an impression upon me, that I felt a thorough revolution within me. An invisible power seemed suddenly to rectify the dis-

order of my affections, and to settle them according to the laws of duty and nature. The Eternal and Omnipresent Power, said I to myself, now reads the bottom of my soul; he compares my secret will with my verbal declaration; Heaven and earth are witness to the solemn engagement I am going to contract; and they shall be witness of my fidelity in observing the obligation. What human duty can they regard, who dare to violate the first and most sacred of all?

A casual glance on Mr. and Mrs. Orbe, whom I saw opposite to each other, fixing their tender looks on me, affected me more powerfully than all the other objects around me. O most amiable and virtuous pair! though your love is less violent, are you therefore less closely attached to each other? Duty and honour are the bonds which unite you; affectionate friends! faithful couple! you do not burn with that devouring flame which consumes the soul, but you love each other with a gentle and refined affection, which nourishes the mind, which prudence authorizes, and reason directs; you, therefore, enjoy more substantial felicity. Ah! that in an union like yours I could recover the same innocence, and attain the same happiness! If I have not like you deserved it, I will at least endeavour to make myself worthy of it by your example.

These sentiments renewed my hopes, and revived my courage; I considered the tie I was preparing to form as a new state, which would purify my soul, and restore me to a just sense of my duty. When the minister asked me whether I promised perfect obedience and fidelity to him whom I received for my husband? I made the promise not only with my lips but with my heart, and I will keep it inviolably till my death.

When we returned home, I sighed for an hour's solitude and recollection. I obtained it, not without difficulty; and

however eager I was to make the best advantage of it, I nevertheless entered into self-examination with reluctance, being afraid lest I should discover that I had only been affected by some transitory impressions, and that at the bottom I should find myself as unworthy a wife as I had been an indiscreet girl. The method of making the trial was sure, but dangerous; I began it by turning my thoughts on you. My heart bore witness that no tender recollection had profaned the solemn engagement I had lately made. I could not conceive without astonishment, how your image could have forborne its obstinate intrusion, and have left me so long at rest, amidst so many occasions which might have recalled you to my mind; I should have mistrusted my insensibility and forgetfulness, as treacherous dependencies, which were too unnatural to be lasting. I found, however, that I was in no danger of delusion: I was sensible that I still loved you as much, if not more than ever; but I felt my affection for you without a blush. I found that I could venture to think of you, without forgetting that I was the wife of another. When a tacit self-confession reported how dear you was to me, my heart was affected, but my conscience and my senses were composed, and from that moment I perceived that my mind was changed in reality. What a torrent of pure joy then rushed into my soul! What tranquil sensations, so long effaced, then began to revive a heart which ignominy had stained, and to diffuse an unusual serenity through my whole frame! I seemed as if I had been new born, and fancied that I was entering into another life. O gentle and balmy virtue! I am regenerated for thee; thou alone canst make life dear to me; to thee alone I consecrate my being. Oh! I have too fatally experienced the loss of thee, ever to abandon thee a second time.

In the rapture of so great, so sudden, so unexpected a change, I ventured to reflect on my situation the preceding day: I trembled, on thinking to what a state of unworthy debasement I had been reduced by forgetting what I owed to myself; and I shuddered at all the dangers I had run since my first step of deviation. What a happy revolution of mind enabled me to discover the horror of the crime which threw temptation before me; and how did the love of discretion revive within me! By what uncommon accident, said I, could I hope to be more faithful to love than to honour, which I held in such high esteem? What good fortune would prevent your inconstancy or my own from delivering me a prey to new attachments? How could I oppose to another lover that resistance which the first had conquered, and that shame which had been accustomed to yield to inclination? Should I pay more regard to the rights of extinguished love, than I did to the claim of virtue, while it maintained its full empire in my soul? What security could I have to love no other but you, except that inward assurance which deceives all lovers, who swear eternal constancy, and inconsiderately perjure themselves upon every change of their affections? Thus, one deviation from virtue would have led to another; and vice grown habitual, would no longer have appeared horrible in my sight. Fallen from honour to infamy, without any hold to stop me; from a seduced virgin I should have become an abandoned woman, the scandal of my sex and the torment of my family. What has saved me from so natural a consequence of my first transgression? What checked me after my first guilty step? What has preserved my reputation, and the esteem of my beloved friends? What has placed me under the protection of a virtuous and discreet husband, whose character is amiable, whose person is agreeable, and who is full of that respect and affection for

me which I have so little deserved? What, in short, enables me to aspire after the character of a virtuous wife, and gives me courage to render myself worthy of that title? I see, I feel it; it is the friendly hand which has conducted me through the paths of darkness, that now removes the veil of error from my eyes; and, in my own despite, restores me to myself. The gentle voice which incessantly murmured within me, now raised its tone, and thundered in my ears, at the very moment that I was near being lost for ever. The Author of all truth would not allow me to quit his presence with the conscious guilt of detestable perjury; and preventing my crime by my remorse, hath shown me the frightful abyss into which I was ready to fall. Eternal Providence! who dost make the insect crawl, and the heavens revolve, thou art watchful over the least of all thy works! thou hast recalled me to that virtue which I was born to revere! deign, therefore, to receive from a heart purified by thy goodness, that homage which thou alone hast rendered worthy thy acceptance.

That instant, being impressed with a lively sense of the danger I had escaped, and of the state of honour and security in which I was happily re-established, I prostrated myself on the ground, and lifting my suppliant hands to Heaven, I invoked that Being enthroned on high, whose pleasure supports or destroys, by means of our own strength, that free will he has bestowed. I eagerly (said I) embrace the proffered good, of which thou alone art the author. I will love the husband to whom thou hast attached me. I will be faithful, because it is the chief duty which unites private families, and society in general. I will be chaste, because it is the parent virtue which nourishes all the rest. I will adhere to every thing relative to the order of nature which thou hast established, and to the dictates of reason which I

have derived from thee. I recommend my heart to thy protection, and my desires to thy guidance. Render all my actions conformable to my steadfast will, which is ever thine; and never more permit momentary error to triumph over the settled choice of my life.

Having finished this short prayer, the first I ever made with true devotion, I found myself confirmed in virtuous resolutions; it seemed so easy and so agreeable to follow these dictates, that I clearly perceived where I must hereafter resort for that power to resist my inclinations, which I could not derive from myself. From this new discovery I acquired fresh confidence, and lamented that fatal blindness which had so long concealed it from me. I never had been devoid of religion, but perhaps I had better have been wholly so, than to have professed one which was external and mechanical; and which satisfied the conscience without affecting the heart: one which was confined to set forms, and taught me to believe in God at stated hours, without thinking of him the remainder of my time. Scrupulously attendant on public worship, I nevertheless drew no advantage from it to assist me in the practice of my duty. Knowing that I was of a good family, I indulged my inclinations, was fond of speculation, and put my trust in reason. Not being able to reconcile the spirit of the Gospel with the manners of the world, nor faith with works, I steered a middle course, which satisfied the vanity of my wisdom: I had one set of maxims for speculation, and another for practice; I forgot in one place the opinions I formed in another; I was a devotee at church, and a philosopher at home: alas! I was nothing any where; my prayers were but words, my reasoning mere sophistry, and the only light I followed was the false glimmering of an *ignis fatuus*, which guided me to destruction.

I cannot describe to you how much this inward principle, which had escaped me till now, made me despise those who had so shamefully misled me. Tell me, I entreat you, what was the strongest reason in their support, and on what foundation did they rest? A favourable instinct directs me to good, some impetuous passion rises in opposition; it takes root in the same instant, what must I do to destroy it? From a contemplation on the order of nature, I discover the beauty of virtue, and from its general utility I derive its excellence. But what do these arguments avail, when they stand in competition to my private interest; and which in the end is of most consequence to me, to procure my own happiness at the expence of others, or to promote the felicity of others at the expence of my own happiness? If the dread of shame or punishment deter me from committing evil for the sake of my own private good, I have nothing more to do than to sin in secret; virtue then cannot upbraid me, and if I am detected, I shall be punished, as at Sparta, not on account of my crime, but because I had not ingenuity to conceal it. In short, admitting the character and the love of virtue to be imprinted in my heart by nature, it will serve me as a rule of conduct till its impressions are defaced; but how shall I be sure always to preserve this inward effigy in its original purity, which has no model among sublunary beings, to which it can be referred? Is it not evident, that irregular affections corrupt the judgment as well as the will, and that conscience itself changes, and in every age, in every people, in every individual, accommodates itself to inconstancy of opinion, and diversity of prejudice?

Adore the Supreme Being, my worthy and prudent friend; with one puff of breath you will be able to dissipate those chimeras of reason, which have a visionary appearance, and which fly like so many shadows before immutable truth. No-

thing exists but through him who is self-existent. It is he who directs the tendency of justice, fixes the basis of virtue, and gives a recompence to a short life spent according to his will: it is he who proclaims aloud to the guilty that their secret crimes are detected, and gives assurance to the righteous in obscurity, that their virtues are not without a witness: it is he, it is his unalterable substance, that is the true model of those perfections of which we all bear the image within us. It is in vain that our passions disfigure it; its traces, which are allied to the Infinite Being, ever present themselves to our reason, and serve to re-establish what error and imposture have perverted. These distinctions seem to me extremely natural; common sense is sufficient to point them out. Every thing which we cannot separate from the idea of Divine essence is God; all the rest is the work of men. It is by the contemplation of this divine model, that the soul becomes refined and exalted; that it learns to despise low desires, and to triumph over base inclinations. A heart impressed with these sublime truths is superior to the mean passions of human nature: the idea of infinite grandeur subdues the pride of man; the delight of contemplation abstracts him from gross desires; and if the Immense Being, who is the subject of his thoughts, had no existence, it would nevertheless be of use to exercise his mind in such meditations, in order to make him more master of himself, more vigorous, more discreet, and more happy.

Do you require a particular instance of those vain subtleties framed by that self-sufficient reason, which so vainly relies on its own strength? Let us coolly examine the arguments of those philosophers, those worthy advocates of a crime, which never yet seduced any whose minds were not previously corrupted. Might one not conclude that by a direct attack on the most holy and most solemn of all contracts,

those dangerous disputants were determined at one stroke to annihilate human society in general, which is founded on the faith of engagements? But let us consider, I beseech you, how they exculpate secret adultery? It is because, say they, no mischief arises from it; not even to the husband, who is ignorant of the wrong. But can they be certain that he will always remain ignorant of the injury offered him? Is it sufficient to authorize perjury and infidelity, that they do no wrong to others? Is the mischief which the guilty do to themselves not sufficient to create an abhorrence of guilt? Is it no crime to be false to our word, to destroy, as far as we are able, the obligation of oaths, and the most inviolable contracts? Is it no crime to take pains to render ourselves false, treacherous, and perjured? Is it no crime to form attachments which occasion you to desire the prejudice, and to wish the death of another? even the death of one whom we ought to love above others, and with whom we have sworn to live? Is not that state in itself an evil, which is productive of a thousand consequential crimes? Even good itself, if attended with so many mischiefs, would, for that reason only, be an evil.

Shall one of the parties pretend to innocence, who may chance to be disengaged, and have pledged his faith to no one? He is grossly mistaken. It is not only the interest of husband and wife, but it is the common benefit of mankind, that the purity of marriage be preserved unsullied. Whenever two persons are joined together by that solemn contract; all mankind enter into a tacit engagement to respect the sacred tie, and to honour the conjugal union; and this appears to be a powerful reason against clandestine marriages, which, as they express no public sign of such an union, expose innocent maids to the temptation of adulterous passion. The public are in some measure guarantees of a contract which passes in

their presence; and we may venture to say, that the honour of a modest woman is under the special protection of all good and worthy people. Whoever, therefore, dares to seduce her is criminal! First, because he has tempted her to sin, and that every one is an accomplice in those crimes which he persuades others to commit: in the next place, he sins directly himself, because he violates the public and sacred faith of matrimony, without which no order or regularity can subsist in society.

The crime, say they, is secret, consequently no injury can result from it to any one. If these philosophers believe the existence of a God, and the immortality of the human soul, can they call that crime secret which has for its witness the Being principally offended, and the only righteous judge? It is a strange kind of a secret which is hid from all eyes except those from which it is our interest most to conceal it! If they do not, however, admit of the omnipresence of the Divinity, yet, how can they dare to affirm that they do injury to no one? How can they prove that it is a matter of indifference to a parent to educate heirs who are strangers to his blood; to be encumbered perhaps with more children than he would otherwise have had, and to be obliged to distribute his fortune among those pledges of his dishonour, without feeling for them any sensations of parental tenderness and natural affection? If we suppose these philosophers to be materialists, we have then a stronger foundation for opposing their tenets by the gentle dictates of nature, which plead in every breast against the principles of a vain philosophy, which have never yet been controverted by sound reasoning. In short, if the body alone produces cogitation, and sentiment depends entirely on organization, will there not be a more strict analogy between two beings of the same blood? Will they not have a more violent attachment to each other? Will there not be a

resemblance between their souls as well as their features, which is a most powerful motive to inspire mutual affection?

Is it doing no injury, therefore, in your opinion, to destroy or disturb this natural union by the mixture of adulterate blood, and to pervert the principle of that mutual affection which ought to cement all the members of one family? Who would not shudder with horror at the thoughts of having one infant changed for another by a nurse? And is it a less crime to make such a change before the infant is born?

If I consider my own sex in particular, what mischiefs do I discover in this incontinency, which is supposed to do no injury! The debasement of a guilty woman, who, after the loss of her honour, soon forfeits all other virtues, is alone sufficient. What manifest symptoms convey to a tender husband the intelligence of that injury which they think to justify by secresy: the loss of the wife's affection is sufficient proof. To what purpose will all her affected endeavours serve, but to manifest her indifference the more? Can we impose upon the jealous eye of love by feigned caresses? And what torture must he feel, who is attached to a beloved object, whose hand embraces, while her heart rejects him! Admitting, however, that fortune should favour a conduct which she has so often betrayed, and to say nothing of the rashness of trusting our own affected innocence and another's peace to precautions which Providence often thinks proper to disconcert——yet, what deceit, what falsehood, what imposture is requisite to conceal a criminal commerce, to deceive a husband, to corrupt servants, and to impose upon the public! What a disgrace to the accomplices! what an example to children! What must become of their education amidst so much solicitude how to gratify a guilty passion with impunity? How is the peace of the family and the union of the heads of it to be maintained? What! in all these circum-

stances does the husband receive no injury? But who can make him recompence for a heart which should have been devoted to him? Who can restore him the affections of a valuable woman? Who can give him peace of mind, and conjugal confidence? Who can cure him of his well grounded suspicions? Who can engage a father to trust the feelings of nature when he embraces his child?

With regard to the pretended connections which may be formed in families by means of adultery and infidelity, it cannot be considered as a serious argument, but rather as an absurd and brutal mockery, which deserves no other answer than disdain and indignation. The treasons, the quarrels, the battles, the murders, with which this irregularity has in all ages pested the earth, are sufficient proofs how far the peace and union of mankind is to be promoted by attachments founded in guilt. If any social principle results from this vile and despicable commerce, it may be compared to that which unites a band of robbers, and which ought to be destroyed and annulled, in order to ensure the safety of lawful communication.

I have endeavoured to suppress the indignation which these principles excited in me, in order to discuss them with greater moderation. The more extravagant and ridiculous I find them, the more I am interested to refute them, in order to make myself ashamed of having listened to them with too little reserve. You see how ill they can endure the test of sound reason; but from whence can we derive the sacred dictates of reason, if not from him who is the source of all? And what shall we think of those who, in order to mislead mankind, prevent this heavenly ray, which he gave them as an unerring guide to virtue? Let us abandon this philosophy of words; let us distrust a fallacious virtue, which undermines all other virtues, and attempts to vindicate every vice, to au-

thorize the practice of every species of guilt. The surest method of discovering our duty is diligently to examine what is right, and we cannot long continue the examination, without recurring to the Author of all goodness. This is what I have done since I have taken pains to rectify my principles, and improve my reason: this is a task you will perform better than I, when you are disposed to pursue the same course. It is a comfort to me to reflect, that you have frequently nourished my mind with elevated notions of religion, and you, whose heart disguised nothing from me, would not have talked to me in that strain had your sentiments differed from your declaration. I recollect with pleasure that conversations of this kind were ever delightful to us.—We never found the presence of the Supreme Being troublesome: it rather filled us with hope than terror: it never yet dismayed any but guilty souls; we were pleased to think that he was witness to our interviews, and we loved to exalt our minds to the contemplation of the Deity. If we were now and then abased by shame, we reflected, that at least he was privy to our inmost thoughts, and that idea renewed our tranquillity.

If this confidence led us astray, nevertheless the principle on which it was founded is alone capable of reclaiming us to virtue. Is it not unworthy of a man to be always at variance with himself; to have one rule for his actions, another for his opinions; to think as if he was abstracted from matter, to act as if he was devoid of soul, and never to be capable of appropriating a single action of his life to his own entire self? For my own part, I think the principles of the ancients are sufficient to fortify us, when they are not confined to mere speculation. Weakness is incident to human nature, and the merciful Being, who made man frail, will no doubt pardon his frailty; but guilt is a quality which belongs only to the

wicked, and will not remain unpunished by the Author of all justice. An infidel, who is otherwise well inclined, practises those virtues he admires; he acts from taste, not from choice. If all his desires happen to be regular, he indulges them without reserve. He would gratify them in the same manner, if they were irregular; for what should restrain him? But he who acknowledges and worships the common Father of mankind, perceives that he is destined for nobler purposes. An ardent wish to fulfil the end of his being animates his zeal; he follows a more certain rule of action than appetite; he knows how to do what is right at the expence of his inclinations, and to sacrifice the desires of his heart to the call of duty. Such, my dear friend, is the heroic sacrifice required of us both. The love which attached us, would have proved the delight of our lives; it survived hope, it bid defiance to time and absence; it endured every kind of proof. So sincere a passion ought never to have decayed of itself; it was worthy to be sacrificed to virtue alone.

I must observe further. All circumstances are altered between us, and your heart must accommodate itself to the change. The wife of M. Wolmar is not your Eloisa; your change of sentiment with regard to her is unavoidable; and it depends upon your own choice to make the alteration redound to your honour, according to the election you make of vice or virtue. I recollect a passage in an author whose authority you will not controvert. Love, says he, is destitute of its greatest charm when it is abandoned by honour. To be sensible of its true value, it must warm the heart, and exalt us, by raising the object of our desires.—Take away the idea of perfection, and you deprive love of all its enthusiasm; banish esteem, and love is no more. How can a woman honour the man whom she ought to despise? How can he himself honour her, who has not scrupled to

abandon herself to a vile seducer? Thus they will soon entertain a mutual contempt for each other. Love, that celestial principle, will be debased into a shameful commerce between them. They will have lost their honour without attaining felicity.* This, my dear friend, is our lesson, penned by your own hand: never were our hearts more agreeably attached, and never was honour so dear to us, as in those happy days when this letter was written. Reflect then, how we should be misled at this time by a guilty passion, nourished at the expence of the most agreeable transports which can inspire the soul! The horror of vice, which is so natural to us both, would soon extend to the partner of our guilt; we should entertain mutual hatred, for having loved each other indiscreetly, and remorse would quickly extinguish affection. Is it not better to refine a generous sentiment, in order to render it permanent? Is it not better at least to preserve what we may grant with innocence? Is not this preserving what is more delightful than all other enjoyments? Yes, my dear and worthy friend, to keep our love inviolable, we must renounce each other. Let us forget all that has passed, and continue the lover of my soul. This idea is so agreeable, that it compensates for every thing.

Thus have I drawn a faithful picture of my life, and given you a genuine detail of every inward sentiment. Be assured that I love you still. I am still attached to you with such a tender and lively affection, that any other than myself would be alarmed: but I feel a principle of a different kind within me, which secures me against any apprehensions from such an attachment. I perceive that the nature of my affection is entirely altered, and in this respect, my past failings are the grounds of my present security. I know that scru-

* See Letter XXIV. in Vol. I.

pulous decorum and the parade of virtue might require more of me, and not be satisfied, unless I utterly forgot you. But I have a more certain rule of conduct, and will abide by it. I attend to the secret dictates of conscience; I find nothing there which reproaches me, and it never deceives those who consult it with sincerity. If this be not sufficient to justify me before the world, it is enough to restore me to composure of mind. How has this happy change been produced? I know not how. All I know is, that I wished for it most ardently. God alone has accomplished the rest. I am convinced, that a mind once corrupted will ever remain so, and will never recover of itself, unless some sudden revolution, some unexpected change of fortune and condition, entirely alters its connections. When all its habits are destroyed, and all its passions modified, by that thorough revolution, it sometimes resumes its primitive character, and becomes like a new being recently formed by the hands of nature. Then the recollection of its former unworthiness may serve as a preservative against relapse. Yesterday we were base and abject; to-day we are spirited and magnanimous. By thus making a close comparison between the two different states, we become more sensible of the value of that which we have recovered, and more attentive to support it.

My marriage has made me experience something like the change I endeavoured to explain to you. This tie, which I dreaded so much, has extricated me from a slavery much more dreadful; and my husband becomes dearer to me for having restored me to myself.

You and I were, however, too closely attached for a change of this kind to destroy the union between us. If you lose an affectionate mistress, you gain a faithful friend; and whatever we have imagined in our state of delusion, I cannot believe that the alteration is to your prejudice. Let it, I con-

jure you, encourage you to take the same resolution that I have formed, to become hereafter more wise and virtuous, and to refine the lessons of philosophy by the precepts of Christian morality. I shall never be thoroughly happy, unless you likewise enjoy happiness; and I am more convinced than ever, that there is no real felicity without virtue. If you sincerely love me, afford me the agreeable consolation to find that our hearts correspond in their return to virtue, as they unhappily agreed in their deviation from it.

I need not make any apology for the length of this epistle. Were you less dear to me, I should have shortened it. Before I conclude, I have one favour to request of you. M. Wolmar is a stranger to my past conduct; but a frank sincerity is part of the duty I owe to him: I should have made the confession an hundred times: you alone have restrained me. Though I am acquainted with M. Wolmar's discretion and moderation, yet to mention your name is always to bring you in competition, and I would not do it without your consent. Can this request be disagreeable to you? And when I flatter myself to obtain your leave, do I depend too much on you or on myself? Consider, I beseech you, that this reserve is incousistent with innocence; that it grows every day more insupportable; and that I shall not enjoy a moment's rest till I receive your answer.

LETTER CXII.

TO ELOISA.

And wilt thou no longer be my Eloisa? Ah! do not tell me so, thou most worthy of all thy sex! Thou art more mine than ever. Thy merit claims homage from the whole world.

It was thee whom I adored, when I first became susceptible of the impressions of beauty: and I shall never cease to adore thee, even after death, if my soul still retains any recollection of those truly celestial charms which were my sole delight when living. The courageous effort, by which you have recovered all your virtue, renders you more equal to your lovely self. No, whatever torment the sensation and the confession give me, yet I must declare that you never were my Eloisa more perfectly than at this moment in which you renounce me. Alas! I regain my Eloisa, by losing her for ever. But I, whose heart shudders even at an attempt to imitate your virtue; I, who am tormented with a criminal passion, which I can neither support nor subdue; am I the man I vainly imagined myself to be? was I worthy of your esteem? what right had I to importune you with my complaints and my despair? did it become me to presume a sigh for you? Ah! what was I that I should dare to love Eloisa?

Fool that I am! as though I did not feel myself sufficiently humbled, without taking pains to seek fresh circumstances of humiliation! Why should I increase my mortification by enumerating distinctions unknown to love? It was that which exalted me; and which made me your equal. Our hearts were blended, we shared our sentiments in common, and mine partook of the elevation of yours. Behold me now sunk into my pristine baseness! Thou gentle hope, which didst so long feed my soul to deceive me, art thou then extinguished without a prospect of return? will she not be mine? must I lose her for ever? does she make another happy?——O rage! O torments of hell!——O faithless! ought you ever?——pardon me, pardon me, dearest madam! have pity on my distraction! O, you had too much reason when you told me, she is no more——She is, indeed, no

more that affectionate Eloisa, to whom I could disclose every emotion of my heart. How could I complain when I found myself unhappy? could she listen to my complaints? was I unhappy?—what then am I now? No, I will not make you blush for yourself or me. Hope is no more, we must renounce each other, we must part. Virtue herself has pronounced the decree, and your hand has been capable of transcribing it Let us forget each other——Forget me, at least. I am determined. I swear, that I will never speak to you of myself again.

May I yet venture to talk of you, and to interest myself in what is now the only object of my concern? I mean your happiness. In describing to me the state of your mind, you say nothing of your present situation. As a reward of the sacrifice I have made, of which you ought to be sensible, at least deign to deliver me from this insupportable doubt. Eloisa, are you happy? If you are, give me the only comfort of which my despair is susceptible: if you are not, be compassionate enough to tell me so; my misery then will be less durable.

The more I reflect on the confession you propose to make, the less I am inclined to consent to it; and the same motive which always deprived me of resolution to deny your requests, renders me inexorable in this particular. It is a subject of the last importance, and I conjure you to weigh my reasons with attention. First, your excessive delicacy seems to lead you into a mistake, and I do not see on what foundation the most rigid virtue can exact such a confession from you. No engagement whatever can have any retro-active effect. We cannot bind ourselves with respect to time past, nor promise what is not in our power to perform: how can you be obliged to give your husband an account of the use you formerly made of your liberty; or how can you be responsible to him

for a fidelity which you never promised to him? Do not deceive yourself, Eloisa; it is not to your husband, it is to your friend, that you have violated your engagement. Before we were separated by your father's tyranny, Heaven and nature had formed us for each other. By entering into other connections you have been guilty of a crime which love and honour can never forgive, and it is I who have a right to reclaim the prize which M. Wolmar has ravished from my arms.

If, under any circumstances, duty can exact such a confession, it is when the danger of a relapse obliges a prudent woman to take precautions for her security. But your letter has given me more light into your real sentiments than you imagine. In reading it, I felt in my own heart how much yours, upon a near approach, nay, even in the bosom of love, would have abhorred a criminal connexion, the horror of which was only diminished by its distance.

As duty and honour do not require such confidence, prudence and reason forbid it; for it is running a needless risk of forfeiting every thing that is dear in wedlock, the attachment of a husband, mutual confidence, and the peace of a family.—Have you thoroughly weighed the consequences of such a step? Are you sufficiently acquainted with your husband, to be certain of the effect it will produce in his disposition? Do you know how many men there are, who, from such a confession, would conceive an immoderate jealousy, and an invincible contempt, and would probably be provoked even to attempt your life? In such a nice examination we ought to attend to time, place, and the difference of characters. In the country where I reside at present, such a confidence would be attended with no danger; and they who make so light of conjugal fidelity are not people to be violently affected by any frailty of conduct prior to the en-

gagement. Not to mention reasons which sometimes render those confessions indispensable, and which cannot be applied to your case, I know some women of tolerable estimation, who, with very little risk, have made a merit of that kind of sincerity, in order, perhaps, by that sacrifice to obtain a confidence which they might afterwards abuse at will. But in those countries where the sanctity of marriage is more respected, in those countries where that sacred tie forms a solid union, and where husbands have a real attachment to their wives, they require a more severe account of their conduct; they expect that their hearts should never have felt any tender affections but for themselves; usurping a right which they have not, they unreasonably expect their wives to have been theirs even before they belonged to them, and they are as unwilling to excuse an abuse of liberty as a real infidelity.

Believe me, virtuous Eloisa, and distrust this fruitless and unnecessary zeal. Keep this dangerous secret, which nothing can oblige you to reveal; the discovery of which might utterly ruin you, without being of any advantage to your husband. If he is worthy of such a confession, it will disturb his peace of mind, and you will have the mortification of having afflicted him without reason; if he is unworthy, why will you give him a pretence for using you ill? How do you know whether your virtue, which has defended you from the assaults of your heart, will likewise support you against the influence of domestic troubles daily reviving? Do not voluntarily increase your misfortunes, lest they become too powerful for your resistance, and you should at length relapse by means of your scruples into a worse condition than that from which you have with so much difficulty disengaged yourself. —Prudence is the basis of every virtue; consult that, I entreat you, in this most important crisis of your life; and if the fatal secret oppresses you so violently, wait at least,

before you unbosom yourself, till time and length of years shall have made you more perfectly acquainted with your husband: stay till his heart, now affected by the power of your beauty, shall be susceptible of those more lasting impressions which the charms of your disposition cannot fail to make, and till he is become habitually sensible of your perfections. After all, if these reasons, powerful as they are, should not convince you, yet do not refuse to listen to the voice which utters them. O Eloisa! hearken to a man who is yet, in some degree, susceptible of virtue, and who has a right to expect some concession from you at least, in return for the sacrifice he has made you to-day.

I must conclude this letter. I find that I cannot forbear resuming a strain to which you must no longer give ear. Eloisa, I must part with you! Young as I am, am I already destined to renounce felicity? Oh time never to be recalled! time irrevocably past! source of everlasting sorrows! pleasures, transports, delightful ecstacies, delicious moments, celestial raptures! My love, my only love, the honour and delight of my soul! farewell for ever!

LETTER CXIII.

FROM ELOISA.

You ask me, whether I am happy? The question affects me, and by your manner of asking it you facilitate my answer; for so far from wishing to banish you from my memory, as you desire me, I confess that I should not be happy was your affection for me to cease: yet at present I am happy in most respects, and nothing but your felicity is wanting to

complete mine. If, in my last, I avoided making any mention of M. Wolmar, it was out of tenderness to you. I was too well acquainted with your sensibility of temper, not to be under apprehensions of irritating your pain; but your solicitude with regard to my felicity obliging me to mention him on whom it depends, I cannot speak of him without doing justice to his worth, as becomes his wife, and a friend to truth.

M. Wolmar is near fifty years of age; but by means of an uniform regular course of life, and a serenity not ruffled by any violent passions, he has preserved such a healthy constitution, and such a florid complexion, that he scarce appears to be forty, and he bears no symptoms of age, but prudence and experience. His countenance is noble and engaging; his address open and unaffected; his manner rather sincere than courteous; he speaks little and with great judgment, but without any affectation of being concise and sententious. His behaviour is the same to every one; he neither courts nor shuns any individual; and he never gives any preference but what reason justifies.

In spite of his natural indifference, his heart, seconding my father's inclinations, entertained a liking for me, and for the first time formed a tender attachment. This moderate and lasting affection has been governed by such strict rules of decorum, and observed such a constant uniformity, that he was under no necessity of altering his manners on changing his condition, and, without violating conjugal decorum, his behaviour to me now is the same as it was before marriage. I never saw him either gay or melancholy, but always contented; he never talks to me of himself, and seldom of me; he is not in continual search after me, but he does not seem displeased that I should seek his company; and he seems to part from me unwillingly. He is serious without disposing

others to be grave; on the contrary, his serenity of manners seems an invitation to me to be sprightly; and as the pleasures I relish are the only pleasures of which he is susceptible, an endeavour to amuse myself is among the duties I owe to him. In one word, he wishes to see me happy; he has not told me so, but his conduct declares it; and to wish the happiness of a wife, is to make her really happy.

With all the attention with which I have been able to observe him, I cannot discover any particular passion to which he is attached, except his affection for me: it is, however, so even and temperate, that one would conclude he had power to limit the degree of his passion, and that he had determined not to love beyond the bounds of discretion. He is in reality what Lord B—— is in his own imagination; in this respect I find him greatly preferable to those passionate lovers of whom we are so fond; for the heart deceives us a thousand ways, and acts from a suspicious principle; but reason always proposes a just end: the rules of duty which it enjoins are sure, evident, and practicable; and whenever our reason is led astray, we enter into idle speculations which were never intended to be objects of her examination.

M. Wolmar's chief delight is observation. He loves to judge of men's characters and actions. He generally forms his judgment with great impartiality and profound penetration. If an enemy were to do him an injury, he would discuss every motive and expedient with as much composure as if he was transacting any indifferent concern. I do not know by what means he has heard of you; but he has often spoken of you with great esteem to me, and I am sure he is incapable of disguise. I have imagined sometimes that he took particular notice of me during these conversations; but, in all probability, the observation I apprehended was nothing but the secret reproach of an alarmed conscience. However it

be, in this respect I did my duty; neither fear nor shame occasioned me to show an unjust reserve; and I did you justice before him, as I now do him justice before you.

I forgot to tell you concerning our income, and the management of it. The wreck of M. Wolmar's inheritance, with the addition from my father, who has only reserved a pension for himself, make up a handsome and moderate fortune, which M. Wolmar uses with generosity and discretion, by maintaining in his family not an inconvenient and vain display of luxury*, but plenty, with the real conveniences of life; and by distributing necessaries among his indigent neighbours. The economy he has established in his house-

* No association is more common than pride and stinginess. We take from nature, from real pleasures, nay from the stock of necessaries, what we lavish upon opinion. One man adorns his palace at the expence of his kitchen: another prefers a fine service of plate to a good dinner: a third makes a sumptuous entertainment, and starves himself the rest of the year. When I see a sideboard richly decorated, I expect the wine to be very indifferent. How often in the country, when we breathe the fresh morning air, are we tempted by the prospect of a fine garden! we rise early, and by walking gain a keen appetite, which makes us wish for breakfast. Perhaps the domestic is out of the way, or provisions are wanting, or the lady has not given her orders, and you are tired to death with waiting. Sometimes people prevent your desires, and make you a very pompous offer of every thing, upon condition that you accept of nothing. You must fast till three o'clock, or breakfast with the tulips. I remember to have walked in a very beautiful park, which belonged to a lady, who, though extremely fond of coffee, never drank any but when it was at a very low price; yet she very liberally allowed her gardener a salary of a thousand crowns. For my part, I should choose to have tulips less finely variegated, and to drink coffee whenever my appetite called for it.

hold is the image of that order which reigns in his own breast; and his little family seems to be a model of that regularity which is observable in the government of the world. You neither discover that inflexible formality which is rather inconvenient than useful, and which no one, but he who exacts it, can endure; nor do you perceive that mistaken confusion, which, by being incumbered with superfluities, renders every thing useless. The master's hand is seen throughout, without being felt; and he made his first arrangement with so much discretion, that every thing now goes on by itself; and regularity is preserved, without any abridgment of liberty.

This, my worthy friend, is a succinct but faithful account of M. Wolmar's character, as far as I have been able to discover it since I lived with him. Such as he appeared to me the first day, such he seemed the last, without any alteration; which induces me to hope that I know him thoroughly, and that I have no further discoveries to make; for I cannot conceive any change in his behaviour which will not be to his disadvantage.

From this account, you may anticipate the answer to your question, and you must think despicably of me not to suppose me happy, when I have so much reason to be so. What led me into a mistake, and what perhaps still misleads you, is the opinion, that love is necessary to make the married state happy. My good friend, this is a vulgar error; honour, virtue, a certain conformity, not so much of age and condition as of temper and inclination, are the requisites in the conjugal state; nevertheless, it must not be inferred from hence, that this union does not produce an affectionate attachment, which, though it does not amount to love, is not less agreeable, and is much more permanent. Love is attended with a continual inquietude of jealousy, or the dread of separation, by no

means suitable with a married life, which should be a state of peace and tranquillity. The intent of matrimony is not for man and wife to be always taken up with each other, but jointly to discharge the duties of civil society, to govern their family with prudence, and educate their children with discretion. Lovers attend to nothing but each other; they are incessantly engaged with each other; and all that they regard, is how to show their mutual affection. But this is not enough for a married pair, who have so many other objects to enage their attention. There is no passion whatever which exposes us to such delusion as that of love.—We take its violence for a symptom of its duration; the heart overburthened at such an agreeable sensation, extends itself to futurity: and while the heat of love continues, we flatter ourselves that it will never cool. But on the contrary, it is consumed by its own ardour; it glows in youth, it grows faint with decaying beauty, it is utterly extinguished by the frost of age; and since the beginning of the world, there never was an instance of two lovers who sighed for each other when they became grey-headed. We may be assured that sooner or later adoration will cease; then the idol which we worshipped being demolished, we reciprocally see each other in a true light. We look with surprise for the object on which we doated, not being able to discover it more. We are displeased with that which remains in its stead, and which our imagination often disfigures, as much as it embellished it before; there are few people, says Rochefoucault, who are not ashamed of having loved each other when their affection is extinguished. How much is it to be dreaded, therefore, lest these too lively sensations should be succeeded by an irksome state of mind; lest their decline, instead of stopping at indifference, should even reach absolute disgust; lest, in short, being entirely satiated, they, who were too passionately

fond of each other as lovers, should come to hate each other as husband and wife!—My dear friend, you always appeared amiable in my eyes, too fatally so for my innocence and repose; but I never yet saw you but in the character of a lover; and do I know in what light you would have appeared when your passion was no more? I must confess, that, when love expires, it would still have left you in possession of virtue; but is that alone sufficient to make an union happy which the heart ought to cement? And how many virtuous men have made intolerable husbands? In all these respects you may say the same of me.

As to M. Wolmar, no delusion is the foundation of our mutual liking: we see each other in a true light; the sentiment which unites us is not the blind transport of passionate desire, but a constant and invariable attachment between two rational people, who being destined to pass the remainder of their lives together, are content with their lot, and endeavour to make themselves mutually agreeable. It seems as if we could not have suited each other better, had we been formed on purpose for our union. Had his heart been as tender as mine, it is impossible but so much sensibility on each side must sometimes have clashed, and occasioned disagreements. If I was as composed as he, there would be too much indifference between us, and our union would be less pleasing and agreeable. If he did not love me, we should be uneasy together; if his love for me was too passionate, he would be troublesome to me. We are each of us exactly made for the other; he instructs me, I enliven him; the value of both is increased by our union, and we seem destined to form but one soul between us; to which he gives intelligence, and I direct the will. Even his advanced age redounds to our common advantage; for with the passion which agitated me, it is certain that had he been younger I should have married him

with more unwillingness, and my extreme reluctance would probably have prevented the happy revolution I have experienced.

My worthy friend, Heaven directs the good intention of parents, and rewards the docility of children. God forbid that I should wish to insult your affliction! Nothing but a strong desire of giving you the firmest assurance with respect to my present condition could induce me to add what I am going to mention. If, with the sentiments I formerly entertained for you, with the knowledge I have since acquired, I was once more my own mistress, and at liberty to choose a husband, I call that Being who has vouchsafed to enlighten me, and who reads the bottom of my heart, to witness my sincerity, when I declare that I should make choice, not of you, but M. Wolmar.

Perhaps it may be necessary, to complete your cure, that I should inform you of what further remains in my mind. M. Wolmar is much older than I am. If, to punish my failings, Heaven should deprive me of a worthy husband, whom I have so little deserved, it is my firm resolution never to espouse another. If he has not had the good fortune to meet with a chaste virgin, at least he will leave behind him a continent widow. You know me too well, to imagine, that after I have made this declaration, I shall ever recede from it.

What I have said to remove your doubts, may in some measure serve to resolve your objections against the confession which I think it my duty to make to my husband. He is too discreet to punish me for a mortifying step which repentance alone may atone for; and I am not more incapable of the artifice common to the women you speak of, than he is of harbouring such a suspicion. With respect to the reason you assign why such a confession is needless, it is certainly sophistical; for, though we can be under no obligation to a

husband, as such, before marriage, yet that does not authorize one to pass upon him for what one really is not. I perceived this before I married him; and though the oath which my father extorted from me prevented me from discharging my duty in this respect, I am not the less blameable, since it is a crime to take an unjust oath, and a further crime to keep it. But I had another reason, which my heart dared not avow, and which made my guilt greater still. Thank Heaven that reason subsists no longer.

A consideration more just, and of greater weight with me, is the danger of unnecessarily disturbing the peace of a worthy man, who derives his happiness from the esteem he bears to his wife. It certainly is not now in his power to break the tie which binds us together, nor in mine to have been more worthy of his choice. Therefore, by an indiscreet confidence, I run the risk of afflicting him without any advantage, and without reaping any other benefit from my sincerity, than that of discharging my mind of a cruel secret, which oppresses me heavily. I am sensible that I shall be more composed when I have made the discovery; but perhaps he would be less happy; and to prefer my own peace to his would be a bad method of making reparation for my faults.

What then shall I do in this dilemma? Till Heaven shall better instruct me in my duty I will follow your friendly advice; I will be silent; conceal my failings from my husband, and endeavour to repair them by a conduct which may hereafter secure me a pardon.

To begin this necessary reformation, you must consent, my dear friend, that from this time all correspondence between us shall cease. If M. Wolmar had received my confession, he might have determined how far we ought to gratify the sensations of friendship, and give innocent proofs of our mu-

tual attachment; but since I dare not consult him in this particular, I have learned to my cost how far habits, the most justifiable in appearance, are capable of leading us astray. It is time to grow discreet. Notwithstanding I think my heart securely fortified, yet I will no longer venture to be judge in my own cause; nor, now I am a wife, will I give way to the same presumption which betrayed me when I was a maid. This is the last letter you will ever receive from me: I entreat you never to write to me again. Nevertheless, I shall always continue to interest myself with the most tender concern for your welfare, and as my sentiment in this respect is as pure as the light, I should be glad to hear of you occasionally, and to find you in possession of that happiness you deserve. You may write to Mr. Orbe from time to time, when you have any thing interesting to communicate. I hope that the integrity of your soul will be expressed in your letters. Besides, my cousin is too virtuous and discreet to show me any part which is not fit for my perusal, and would not fail to suppress the correspondence, if you were capable of abusing it.

Farewell, my dear and worthy friend; if I thought that fortune could make you happy, I should desire you to go in pursuit of her; but perhaps you have reason to despise her, being master of such accomplishments as will enable you to thrive without her assistance: I would rather desire you to seek after happiness, which is the fortune of the wise; we have ever experienced that there is no felicity without virtue; but examine carefully whether the word virtue, taken in too abstracted a sense, has not more pomp than solidity in it, and whether it is not a term of parade, more calculated to dazzle others, than to satisfy ourselves. I shudder when I reflect that they who secretly meditated adultery should dare to talk

of virtue! Do you know in what sense we understood this respectable epithet, which we abused while we were engaged in a criminal commerce? It was the impetuous passion with which we were mutually inflamed, that disguised its transports under this sacred enthusiasm, in order to render them more dear to us, and to hold us longer in delusion. We were formed, I dare believe, to practise and cherish real virtue; but we were misguided in our pursuit, and we pursued a phantom. It is time to recover from this delusion; it is time to give up from a false guide which has carried us too far astray. My dear friend, your return to wisdom will not be so difficult as you conceive. You have a guide within yourself, whose directions you have disregarded, but never entirely rejected. Your mind is sound, it is attached to what is right; and if just principles sometimes forsake you, it is because you do not use your utmost efforts to maintain them.—Examine your conscience thoroughly, see whether you will not discover some neglected principle, which might have served to put your actions under better regulations, to have made them more consistent with each other, and with one common object. Believe me, it is not sufficient that virtue is the basis of your conduct, unless that basis itself is fixed on a firm foundation. Call to your mind those Indians, who imagined the world is supported by a great elephant, that elephant by a tortoise; and when you ask them, on what the tortoise rests? they can answer you no farther.

I conjure you to regard the remonstrances of friendship, and to choose a more certain road to happiness than that which has so long misguided us. I shall incessantly pray to Heaven to grant us pure felicity, and I shall never be satisfied till we both enjoy it. And if our hearts, in spite of our endeavours, recall the errors of our youth, let the reformation they produced at least warrant the recollection, that we may

say, with the ancient philosopher—Alas! we should have perished if we had not been undone.

Here ends the tedious sermon I have preached to you. I shall have enough to do hereafter to preach to myself. Farewell, my amiable friend, farewell for ever! so inflexible duty decrees: but be assured that the heart of Eloisa can never forget what was so dear to her—Ah me! what am I doing? The blotted paper will inform you.—Ah! is it not excuseable to dissolve in tenderness when we take the last farewell of a friend?

LETTER CXIV.

TO LORD B——.

Yes, my Lord, I confess it: the weight of life is too heavy for my soul. I have long endured it as a burthen; I have lost every thing which could make it dear to me, and nothing remains but irksomeness and vexation. I am told, however, that I am not at liberty to dispose of my life, without the permission of that Being from whom I received it. I am sensible, likewise, that you have a right over it by more titles than one. Your care has twice preserved it, and your goodness is its constant security. I will never dispose of it, till I am certain that I may do it without a crime, and till I have not the least hope of employing it for your service.

You told me that I should be of use to you; why did you deceive me? Since we have been in London, so far from thinking of employing me in your concerns, you have been kind enough to make me your only concern. How superfluous is your obliging solicitude! My Lord, you know I abhor a crime, even worse than I detest life.——I adore the

Supreme Being—I owe every thing thing to you ; I have an affection for you ; you are the only person on earth to whom I am attached. Friendship and duty may chain a wretch to this earth ; sophistry and vain pretences will never detain him. Enlighten my understanding, speak to my heart ; I am ready to hear you, but remember, that despair is not to be imposed upon.

You would have me apply to the test of reason : I will ; let us reason. You desire me to deliberate in proportion to the importance of the question in debate ; I agree to it. Let us investigate truth with temper and moderation. Let us discuss this general proposition with the same indifference we would treat any other. Roebeck wrote an apology for suicide before he put an end to his life. I will not, after his example, write a book on the subject, neither am I well satisfied with that which he has penned ; but I hope in this discussion at least to imitate his moderation.

I have for a long time meditated on this awful subject. You must be sensible that I have, for you know my destiny, and yet I am alive. The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the question may be reduced to this fundamental proposition : Every man has a right by nature to pursue what he thinks good, and avoid what he thinks evil, in all respects which are not injurious to others.

When our life, therefore, becomes a misery to ourselves, and is of advantage to no one, we are at liberty to put an end to our being. If there is any such thing as a clear and self-evident principle, certainly this is one ; and if this be subverted, there is scarce an action in life which may not be made criminal.

Let us hear what the philosophers say on this subject. First, they consider life as something which is not our own, because we hold it as a gift : but because it has been given us,

is it not for that reason our own? Has not God given these sophists two arms? nevertheless, when they are under apprehensions of a mortification, they do not scruple to amputate one, or both, if there be occasion. By a parity of reasoning, we may convince those who believe in the immortality of the soul; for if I sacrifice my arm to the preservation of something more precious, which is my body; I have the same right to sacrifice my body to the preservation of something more valuable, which is the happiness of my existence. If all the gifts which Heaven has bestowed are naturally designed for our good, they are certainly too apt to change their nature; and Providence has endowed us with reason, that we may discern the difference. If this rule did not authorize us to choose the one and reject the other, to what use would it serve among mankind?

But they turn this weak objection into a thousand shapes. They consider a man living upon earth as a soldier placed on duty. God, say they, has fixed you in this world; why do you quit your station without his leave? But you, who argue thus; has he not stationed you in the town where you was born, why therefore do you quit it without his leave? Is not misery of itself, a sufficient permission? Whatever station Providence has assigned me, whether it be in a regiment, or on the earth at large, he intended me to stay there while I found my situation agreeable, and to leave it when it became intolerable. This is the voice of nature, and the voice of God. I agree that we must wait for an order; but when I die a natural death, God does not order me to quit life, he takes it from me: it is by rendering life insupportable, that he orders me to quit it. In the first case, I resist with all my force; in the second, I have the merit of obedience.

Can you conceive that there are some people so absurd as to arraign suicide as a kind of rebellion against Providence,

by an attempt to fly from his laws? But we do not put an end to our being, in order to withdraw ourselves from his commands, but to execute them. What! does the power of God extend no farther than to my body? Is there a spot in the universe, is there any being in the universe which is not subject to his power? and will that power have less immediate influence over me, when my being is refined, and thereby becomes less compound, and of nearer resemblance to the divine essence? No, his justice and goodness are the foundation of my hopes; and if I thought that death would withdraw me from his power, I would give up my resolution to die.

This is one of the quibbles of the Phædo, which, in other respects, abounds with sublime truths. If your slave destroys himself, says Socrates to Cebes, would you not punish him for having unjustly deprived you of your property? Prythee, good Socrates, do we not belong to God after we are dead? The case you put is not applicable; you ought to argue thus: if you incumber your slave with a habit which confines him from discharging his duty properly, will you punish him for quitting it in order to render you better service? The grand error lies in making life of too much importance; as if our existence depended upon it, and that death was a total annihilation. Our life is of no consequence in the sight of God; it is of no importance in the eyes of reason, neither ought it to be of any in our sight; and when we quit our body we only lay aside an inconvenient habit. Is this circumstance so painful, to be the occasion of so much disturbance? My Lord, these declaimers are not in earnest. Their arguments are absurd and cruel, for they aggravate the supposed crime, as if it put a period to existence, and they punish it, as if that existence was eternal.

With respect to Plato's Phædo, which has furnished them

with the only specious argument that has ever been advanced, the question is discussed there in a very light and desultory manner. Socrates being condemned by an unjust judgment, to lose his life in a few hours, had no occasion to enter into an accurate enquiry whether he was at liberty to dispose of it himself. Supposing him really to have been the author of those discourses which Plato ascribes to him, yet believe me, my Lord, he would have meditated with more attention on the subject, had he been in circumstances which required him to reduce his speculations to practice; and a strong proof that no valid objection can be drawn from that immortal work against the right of disposing of our own lives, is, that Cato read it twice through the very night that he destroyed himself.

The same sophisters make it a question, whether life can ever be an evil? But when we consider the multitude of errors, torments, and vices, with which it abounds, one would rather be inclined to doubt whether it can ever be a blessing. Guilt incessantly besieges the most virtuous of mankind. Every moment he lives, he is in danger of falling a prey to the wicked, or of being wicked himself. To struggle, and to endure, is his lot in this world; that of the dishonest man is to do evil, and to suffer. In every other particular they differ, and only agree in sharing the miseries of life in common. If you required authorities and facts, I could cite you the oracles of old, the answers of the sages, and produce instances where acts of virtue have been recompensed with death. But let us leave these considerations, my Lord; it is to you whom I address myself, and I ask you what is the chief attention of a wise man in this life, except, if I may be allowed the expression, to collect himself inwardly, and endeavour, even while he lives, to be dead to every object of sense? The only way by which wisdom

directs us to avoid the miseries of human nature, is it not to detach ourselves from all earthly objects, from every thing that is gross in our composition, to retire within ourselves, and to raise our thoughts to sublime contemplations? If, therefore, our misfortunes are derived from our passions and our errors, with what eagerness should we wish for a state which will deliver us both from the one and the other? What is the fate of those sons of sensuality, who indiscreetly multiply their torments by their pleasures? They, in fact, destroy their existence by extending their connections in this life; they increase the weight of their crimes by their numerous attachments; they relish no enjoyments but what are succeeded by a thousand bitter wants; the more lively their sensibility, the more acute their sufferings; the stronger they are attached to life, the more wretched they become.

But admitting it, in general, a benefit to mankind to crawl upon the earth with gloomy sadness, I do not mean to intimate that the human race ought with one common consent to destroy themselves, and make the world one immense grave. But there are miserable beings, who are too much exalted to be governed by vulgar opinion; to them, despair and grievous torments are the passports of nature. It would be as ridiculous to suppose that life can be a blessing to such men, as it was absurd in the sophister Possidonius to deny that it was an evil, at the same time that he endured all the torments of the gout. While life is agreeable to us, we earnestly wish to prolong it, and nothing but a sense of extreme misery can extinguish the desire of existence; for we naturally conceive a violent dread of death, and this dread conceals the miseries of human nature from our sight. We drag a painful and melancholy life, for a long time before we can resolve to quit it; but when once life becomes so insupportable as to overcome the horror of death, then existence is

evidently a great evil, and we cannot disengage ourselves from it too soon. Therefore, though we cannot exactly ascertain the point at which it ceases to be a blessing, yet at least we are certain that it is an evil long before it appears to be such, and with every sensible man the right of quitting life is, by a great deal, precedent to the temptation.

This is not all. After they have denied that life can be an evil, in order to bar our right of making away with ourselves; they confess immediately afterwards that it is an evil, by reproaching us with want of courage to support it. According to them, it is cowardice to withdraw ourselves from pain and trouble, and there are none but dastards who destroy themselves. O Rome, thou victrix of the world, what a race of cowards did thy empire produce! Let Arria, Eponina, Lucretia, be of the number; they were women.—But Brutus, Cassius, and thou, great and divine Cato, who didst share with the gods the adoration of an astonished world, thou whose sacred and august presence animated the Romans with holy zeal, and made tyrants tremble, little did thy proud admirers imagine that paltry rhetoricians, immured in the dusty corner of a college, would ever attempt to prove that thou wert a coward, for having preferred death to a shameful existence.

O the dignity and energy of your modern writers! how sublime, how intrepid are you with your pens! But, tell me, thou great and valiant hero, who dost so courageously decline the battle, in order to endure the pain of living somewhat longer; when a spark of fire lights upon your hand, why do you withdraw it in such haste? How! are you such a coward that you dare not bear the scorching of fire? Nothing, you say, can oblige you to endure the burning spark. And what obliges me to endure life? Was the creation of man of more difficulty to Providence than that of a straw?

and is not both one and the other equally the work of his hands?

Without doubt, it is an evidence of great fortitude to bear with firmness the misery which we cannot shun; none but a fool, however, will voluntarily endure evils which he can avoid without a crime; and it is very often a great crime to suffer pain unnecessarily. He who has not resolution to deliver himself from a miserable being by a speedy death, is like one who would rather suffer a wound to mortify, than trust to the surgeon's knife for his cure. Come, thou worthy,——— cut off this leg, which endangers my life. I will see it done without shrinking, and will give that hero leave to call me coward, who suffers his leg to mortify, because he dares not undergo the same operation.

I acknowledge that there are duties owing to others, the nature of which will not allow every man to dispose of his life; but, in return, how many are there which give him a right to dispose of it? Let a magistrate, on whom the welfare of a nation depends; let a father of a family, who is bound to procure subsistence for his children; let a debtor, who might ruin his creditors; let these, at all events, discharge their duty; admitting a thousand other civil and domestic relations to oblige an honest and unfortunate man to support the misery of life, to avoid the greater evil of doing injustice; is it, therefore, under circumstances totally different, incumbent on us to preserve a life oppressed with a swarm of miseries, when it can be of no service but to him who has not courage to die? "Kill me, my child, (says the decrepid savage to his son, who carries him on his shoulders, and bends under his weight;) the enemy is at hand; "go to battle with thy brethren; go and preserve thy "children, and do not suffer thy helpless father to fall alive "into the hands of those whose relations he has mangled."

Though hunger, sickness, and poverty, those domestic plagues, more dreadful than savage enemies, may allow a wretched cripple to consume, in a sick-bed, the provisions of a family which can scarce subsist itself, yet he who has no connections, whom Heaven has reduced to the necessity of living alone, whose wretched existence can produce no good; why should not he, at least, have the right of quitting a station where his complaints are troublesome, and his sufferings of no benefit?

Weigh those considerations, my Lord; collect these arguments, and you will find that they may be reduced to the most simple of nature's rights, of which no man of sense ever yet entertained a doubt. In fact, why should we be allowed to cure ourselves of the gout, and not to get rid of the misery of life? Do not both evils proceed from the same hand? To what purpose is it to say, that death is painful? Are drugs agreeable to be taken? No; nature revolts against both. Let them prove, therefore, that it is more justifiable to cure a transient disorder by the application of remedies, than to free ourselves from an incurable evil, by putting an end to life; and let them show how it can be less criminal to use the bark for a fever, than to take opium for the stone. If we consider the object in view, it is in both cases to free ourselves from painful sensations; if we regard the means, both one and the other are equally natural; if we consider the repugnance of our nature, it operates equally on both sides; if we attend to the will of Providence, can we struggle against evil of which it is not the author? Can we deliver ourselves from any torment which the hand of God has not inflicted? What are the bounds which limit his power, and when is resistance lawful? Are we then to make no alteration in the condition of things, because every thing is in the state he appointed? must we do nothing in this life, for fear of infringing his

laws, or is it in our power to break them if we would? No, my Lord, the occupation of man is more great and noble. God did not give him life that he should supinely remain in a state of constant inactivity: but he gave him freedom to act, conscience to will, and reason to choose what is good. He has constituted him sole judge of all his actions. He has engraved this precept in his heart—"Do whatever you conceive to be for your own good, provided you thereby do no injury to others." If my sensations tell me that death is eligible, I resist his orders by an obstinate resolution to live; for, by making death desirable, he directs me to put an end to my being.

My Lord, I appeal to your wisdom and candour; what more infallible maxims can reason deduce from religion, with respect to suicide? If Christians have adopted contrary tenets, they are neither drawn from the principles of religion, nor from the only sure guide, the Scriptures, but borrowed from the Pagan philosophers. Lactantius and Augustine, the first who propagated this new doctrine, of which Jesus Christ and his Apostles take no notice, ground their arguments entirely on the reasoning of the Phædo, which I have already controverted; so that the believers, who, in this respect, think they are supported by the authority of the Gospel, are in fact only countenanced by the authority of Plato. In truth, where do we find, throughout the whole Bible, any law against suicide, or so much as a bare disapprobation of it; and is it not very unaccountable, that among the instances produced of persons who devoted themselves to death, we do not find the least word of improbation against examples of this kind? Nay, what is more, the instance of Samson's voluntary death is authorized by a miracle, by which he revenges himself of his enemies. Would this miracle have been displayed to justify a crime; and would this man, who lost

his strength, by suffering himself to be seduced by the allurements of a woman, have recovered it to commit an authorized crime, as if God himself would practise deceit on men?

"Thou shalt do no murder," says the Decalogue. What are we to infer from this? If this commandment is to be taken literally, we must not destroy malefactors nor our enemies: and Moses, who put so many people to death, was a bad interpreter of his own precept. If there are any exceptions, certainly the first must be in favour of suicide, because it is exempt from any degree of violence and injustice, the two only circumstances which can make homicide criminal; and because nature, moreover, has, in this respect, thrown sufficient obstacles in the way.

But still they tell us, we must patiently endure the evils which God inflicts, and make a merit of our sufferings. This application, however, of the maxims of Christianity is very ill calculated to satisfy our judgment. Man is subject to a thousand troubles; his life is a complication of evils, and he seems to have been born only to suffer. Reason directs him to shun as many of these evils as he can avoid; and religion, which is never in contradiction to reason, approves of his endeavours. But how inconsiderable is the account of these evils, in comparison with those he is obliged to endure against his will? It is with respect to these that a merciful God allows man to claim the merit of resistance; he receives the tribute he has been pleased to impose as a voluntary homage, and he places our resignation in this life to our profit in the next. True repentance is derived from nature; if man endures patiently whatever he is obliged to suffer, he does, in this respect, all that God requires of him; and if any one is so inflated with pride, as to attempt more, he is a madman, who ought to be confined, or an impostor, who ought to be punished. Let us therefore, without scruple, fly

from all the evils we can avoid; there will still be too many left for us to endure. Let us, without remorse, quit life itself when it becomes a torment to us, since it is in our own power to do it, and that in so doing we neither offend God nor man. If we would offer a sacrifice to the Supreme Being, it is nothing to undergo death! Let us devote to God that which he demands by the voice of reason, and into his hands let us peaceably surrender our souls.

Such are the liberal precepts which good sense dictates to every man, and which religion authorizes*. Let us apply these precepts to ourselves. You have condescended to disclose your mind to me; I am acquainted with your uneasiness; you do not endure less than myself; and your troubles, like mine, are incurable; and they are the more

* A strange letter this for the discussion of such a subject! Do men argue so coolly on a question of this nature, when they examine it on their own accounts? Is the letter a forgery, or does the author reason only with an intent to be refuted? What makes our opinion in this particular dubious, is the example of Robeck, which he cites, and which seems to warrant his own. Robeck deliberated so gravely, that he had patience to write a book, a large, voluminous, weighty, and dispassionate book; and when he had concluded, according to his principles, that it was lawful to put an end to our being, he destroyed himself with the same composure that he wrote. Let us beware of the prejudices of the times, and of particular countries. When suicide is out of fashion, we conclude that none but madmen destroy themselves; all the efforts of courage appear chimerical to dastardly minds; every one judges of others by himself. Nevertheless, how many instances are there, well attested, of men, in every other respect perfectly discreet, who, without remorse, rage, or despair, have quitted life for no other reason than because it was a burthen to them, and have died with more composure than they lived.

remediless, as the laws of honour are more immutable than those of fortune. You bear them, I must confess, with fortitude. Virtue supports you ; advance but one step farther, and she disengages you. You entreat me to suffer ; my Lord, I dare importune you to put an end to your sufferings ; and I leave you to judge which of us is most dear to the other.

Why should we delay doing that which we must do at last ? Shall we wait till old age and decrepid baseness attach us to life, after they have robbed it of its charms, and till we are doomed to drag an infirm and decrepid body with labour, ignominy, and pain ? We are at an age when the soul has vigour to disengage itself with ease from its shackles, and when a man knows how to die as he ought : when farther advanced in years, he suffers himself to be torn from life, which he quits with reluctance. Let us take advantage of this time, when the tedium of life makes death desirable ; and let us tremble for fear it should come in all its horrors, at the moment when we could wish to avoid it. I remember the time, when I prayed to Heaven only for a single hour of life, and when I should have died in despair if it had not been granted. Ah ! what a pain it is to burst asunder the ties which attach our hearts to this world, and how advisable it is to quit life the moment the connection is broken ! I am sensible, my Lord, that we are both worthy of a purer mansion ; virtue points it out, and destiny invites us to seek it. May the friendship which unites us, preserve our union to the latest hour ! O what a pleasure for two sincere friends voluntarily to end their days in each other's arms, to intermingle their latest breath, and at the same instant to give up the soul which they shared in common ! What pain, what regret can infect their last moments ? What do they quit by taking leave of the world ? They go together ; they quit nothing.

LETTER CXV.

THE ANSWER.

Thou art distracted, my friend, by a fatal passion; be more discreet; do not give counsel, whilst thou standest so much in need of advice. I have known greater evils than yours. I am armed with fortitude of mind: I am an Englishman, and not afraid to die; but I know how to live and suffer as becomes a man. I have seen death near at hand, and have viewed it with too much indifference to go in search of it.

It is true, I thought you might be of use to me; my affection stood in need of yours: your endeavours might have been serviceable to me; your understanding might have enlightened me in the most important concern of my life: if I do not avail myself of it, whom are you to impute it to? Where is it? What is become of it? What are you capable of? Of what use can you be in your present condition? What service can I expect from you? A senseless grief renders you stupid and unconcerned. Thou art no man; thou art nothing; and if I did not consider what thou mightest be, I cannot conceive any thing more abject.

There is need of no other proof than your letter itself. Formerly I could discover in you good sense and truth. Your sentiments were just, your reflections proper, and I liked you not only from judgment but choice; for I considered your influence as an additional motive to excite me to the study of wisdom. But what do I perceive now in the arguments of your letter, with which you appear to be so highly satisfied? A wretched and perpetual sophistry, which in the erroneous deviations of your reason shows the disorder

of your mind; and which I would not stoop to refute, if I did not commiserate your delirium.

To subvert all your reasoning with one word, I would only ask you a single question. You who believe in the existence of a God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the free will of man, you surely cannot suppose that an intelligent being is embodied, and stationed on the earth by accident only, to exist, to suffer, and to die. It is certainly most probable that the life of man is not without some design, some end, some moral object. I entreat you to give me a direct answer to this point; after which we will deliberately examine your letter, and you will blush to have written it.

But let us wave all general maxims, about which we often hold violent disputes, without adopting any of them in practice; for in their application we always find some particular circumstances, which make such an alteration in the state of things, that every one thinks himself dispensed from submitting to the rules which he prescribes to others; and it is well known, that every man who establishes general principles, deems them obligatory on all the world, himself excepted. Once more let us speak to you in particular.

You believe that you have a right to put an end to your being. Your proof is of a very singular nature; "because I am disposed to die, (say you,) I have a right to destroy myself." This is certainly a very convenient argument for villains of all kinds: they ought to be very thankful to you for the arms with which you have furnished them: there can be no crimes, which, according to your arguments, may not be justified by the temptation to perpetrate them, and as soon as the impetuosity of passion shall prevail over the horror of guilt, their disposition to do evil will be considered as a right to commit it.

Is it lawful for you, therefore, to quit life? I should be

glad to know whether you have yet begun to live? What! was you placed here on earth to do nothing in this world? Did not Heaven, when it gave you existence, give you some task or employment? If you have accomplished your day's work before evening, rest yourself for the remainder of the day; you have a right to do it; but let us see your work. What answer are you prepared to make the Supreme Judge, when he demands an account of your time? Tell me, what can you say to him?——I have seduced a virtuous girl: I have forsaken a friend in his distress. Thou unhappy wretch! point out to me that just man who can boast that he has lived long enough; let me learn from him in what manner I ought to have spent my days, to be at liberty to quit life.

You enumerate the evils of human nature.—You are not ashamed to exhaust common-place topics, which have been hackneyed over a hundred times; and you conclude that life is an evil. But search, examine into the order of things, and see whether you can find any good which is not intermingled with evil. Does it, therefore, follow that there is no good in the universe, and can you confound what is in its own nature evil, with that which is only an evil accidentally? You have confessed yourself, that the transitory and passive life of man is of no consequence, and only bears respect to matter from which he will soon be disencumbered; but his active and moral life, which ought to have most influence over his nature, consists in the exercise of free-will. Life is an evil to a wicked man in prosperity, and a blessing to an honest man in distress: for it is not its casual modification, but its relation to some final object, which makes it either good or bad. After all, what are these cruel torments which force you to abandon life? Do you imagine that under your affected impartiality in the enumeration of the evils of this life, I did not discover that you was ashamed to speak of

your own? Trust me, and do not at once abandon every virtue.—Preserve at least your wonted sincerity, and speak thus open to your friend: I have lost all hope of seducing a modest woman, I am obliged, therefore, to be a man of virtue; I had much rather die."

You are weary of living; and you tell me that life is an evil. Sooner or later you will receive consolation, and then you will say life is a blessing. You will speak with more truth, though not with better reason; for nothing will have altered but yourself. Begin the alteration then from this day; and since all the evil you lament is in the disposition of your own mind, correct your irregular appetites, and do not set your house on fire to avoid the trouble of putting it in order.

I endure misery, say you: is it in my power to avoid suffering? But this is changing the state of the question: for the subject of enquiry is, not whether you suffer, but whether your life is an evil? Let us proceed. You are wretched, you naturally endeavour to extricate yourself from misery. Let us see whether, for that purpose, it is necessary to die.

Let us for a moment examine the natural tendency of the afflictions of the mind, as in direct opposition to the evils of the body, the two substances being of contrary natures. The latter become worse and more inveterate the longer they continue, and at length utterly destroy this mortal machine. The former, on the contrary, being only external and transitory modifications of an immortal and uncompounded essence, are insensibly effaced, and leave the mind in its original form, which is not susceptible of alteration. Grief, disquietude, regret, and despair, are evils of short duration, which never take root in the mind; and experience always falsifies that bitter reflection which makes us imagine our misery will have no end. I will go farther; I cannot imagine that the vices which contaminate us are more inherent in our

nature than the troubles we endure; I not only believe that they perish with the body which gave them birth, but I think, beyond all doubt, that a longer life would be sufficient to reform mankind, and that many ages of youth would teach us that nothing is preferable to virtue.

However this may be, as the greatest part of our physical evils are incessantly increasing, the acute pains of the body, when they are incurable, may justify a man's destroying himself; for all his faculties being distracted with pain, and the evil being without remedy, he has no longer any use either of his will or of his reason; he ceases to be a man before he is dead, and does nothing more in taking his life than quit a body which incumbers him, and in which his soul is no longer resident.

But it is otherwise with the afflictions of the mind, which, let them be ever so acute, always carry their remedy with them. In fact, what is it that makes any evil intolerable? Nothing but its duration. The operations of surgery are generally much more painful than the disorders they cure; but the pain occasioned by the latter is lasting, that of the operation is momentary, and therefore preferable. What occasion is there, therefore, for any operation to remove troubles which die of course by their duration, the only circumstance which could render them insupportable? Is it reasonable to apply such desperate remedies to evils which expire of themselves? To a man who values himself on his fortitude and who estimates years at their real value; of two ways by which he may extricate himself from the same troubles, which will appear preferable, death or time? Have patience and you will be cured.—What would you desire more?

Oh! you will say, it doubles my afflictions to reflect that they will cease at last! This is the vain sophistry of grief! an apophthegm void of reason, of propriety, and perhaps of

sincerity.—What an absurd motive of despair is the hope of terminating misery*! Even allowing this fantastical reflection, who would not choose to increase the present pain for a moment, under the assurance of putting an end to it, as we scarify a wound, in order to heal it? and admitting any charm in grief, to make us in love with suffering, when we release ourselves from it by putting an end to our being, do we not at that instant incur all that we apprehend hereafter?

Reflect thoroughly, young man; what are ten, twenty, thirty years, in competition with immortality? Pain and pleasure pass like a shadow; life slides away in an instant; it is nothing of itself, its value depends on the use we make of it. The good that we have done is all that remains, and it is that alone which marks its importance.

Therefore, do not say any more that your existence is an evil, since it depends on yourself to make it a blessing: and if it be an evil to have lived, this is an additional reason for prolonging life. Do not pretend neither to say any more that you are at liberty to die; for it is as much as to say that you have power to alter your nature, that you have a right to revolt against the Author of your being, and to frustrate the end of your existence. But when you add, that your death does injury to no one, do you recollect that you make this declaration to your friend?

Your friend does injury to no one. I understand you! You think the loss I shall sustain by your death of no importance! you deem my affliction of no consequence. I

* No, my Lord, we do not put an end to misery by these means, but rather fill the measure of affliction, by bursting asunder the last ties which attach us to felicity. When we regret what was dear to us, the grief itself still attaches us to the object we lament, which is a state less deplorable than to be attached to nothing.

will urge to you no more the rights of friendship, which you despise; but are there no obligations still more dear*, which ought to induce you to preserve your life? If there be a person in the world who loved you to that degree as to be unwilling to survive you, and whose happiness depends on yours, do you think that you have no obligations to her? Will not the execution of your wicked design disturb the peace of a mind, which has been, with such difficulty, restored to its former innocence? Are not you afraid to add fresh torments to a heart of such sensibility? Are you not apprehensive lest your death should be attended with a loss more fatal, which would deprive the world and virtue itself of its brightest ornament? And if she should survive you, are not you afraid to rouse up remorse in her bosom, which is more grievous to support than life itself? Thou ungrateful friend! thou indelicate lover! wilt thou always be taken up wholly with thyself? Wilt thou always think on thy own troubles alone? Hast thou no regard for the happiness of one who was so dear to thee? and cannot thou resolve to live for her who was willing to die with thee?

You talk of the duties of a magistrate, and of a father of a family; and because you are not under those circumstances, you think yourself absolutely free. And are you then under no obligations to society, to whom you are indebted for your preservation, your talents, your understanding? Do you owe nothing to your native country, and to those unhappy people who may need your assistance? O what an accurate calculation you make! Among the obligations you have enumerated you have only omitted those of a man and of a

* Obligations more dear than those of friendship! Is it a philosopher who talks thus? But this affected sophist was of an amorous disposition.

citizen. Where is the virtuous patriot, who refused to enlist under a foreign prince, because his blood ought not to be spilt but in the service of his country; and who now, in a fit of despair, is ready to shed it against the express prohibition of the laws? The laws, the laws, young man! did any wise man ever despise them? Socrates, though innocent, out of regard to them, refused to quit his prison. You do not scruple to violate them by quitting life unjustly; and you ask, what injury do I!

You endeavour to justify yourself by example. You presume to mention the Romans! it becomes you, indeed, to cite those illustrious names. Tell me, did Brutus die a lover in despair, and did Cato plunge the dagger in his breast for his mistress? Thou weak and abject man! what resemblance is there between Cato and thee? Show me the common standard between that sublime soul and thine.—Ah! vain wretch, hold thy peace: I am afraid to profane his name by a vindication of his conduct. At that august and sacred name every friend to virtue should bow to the ground, and honour the memory of the greatest hero in silence.

How ill you have selected your examples, and how meanly you judge of the Romans, if you imagine that they thought themselves at liberty to quit life so soon as it became a burthen to them. Recur to the excellent days of that republic, and see whether you will find a single citizen of virtue, who thus freed himself from the discharge of his duty, even after the most cruel misfortunes.—When Regulus was on his return to Carthage, did he prevent the torments which he knew were preparing for him, by destroying himself? What would not Posthumus have given, when obliged to pass under the yoke at Claudium, had this resource been justifiable? How much did even the senate admire that effort of courage, which enabled the consul Varo to survive his defeat?

For what reasons did so many generals voluntarily surrender themselves to their enemies, they to whom ignominy was so dreadful, and who were so little afraid of dying? It was because they considered their blood, their life, and their latest breath, as devoted to their country; and neither shame nor misfortune could dissuade them from this sacred duty. But when the laws were subverted, and the state became a prey to tyranny, the citizens resumed their natural liberty, and the right they had over their own lives. When Rome was no more, it was lawful for the Romans to give up their lives; they had discharged their duties on earth; they had no longer any country to defend: they were therefore at liberty to dispose of their lives, and to obtain that freedom for themselves, which they could not recover for their country. After having spent their days in the service of expiring Rome, and in fighting for the defence of its laws, they died great and virtuous, as they had lived, and their death was an additional tribute to the glory of the Roman name, since none of them beheld a sight above all others most dishonourable, that of a true citizen stooping to an usurper.

But thou, what art thou? What hast thou done? Dost thou think to excuse thyself on account of thy obscurity? Does thy weakness exempt thee from thy duty, and because thou hast neither rank nor distinction in thy country, art thou less subject to the laws? It becomes you vastly to presume to talk of dying, while you owe the service of your life to your equals.—Know, that a death, such as you meditate, is shameful and surreptitious. It is a theft committed on mankind in general. Before you quit life, return the benefits you have received from every individual. But, you say, I have no attachments; I am useless in the world. O thou young philosopher! art thou ignorant that thou canst not move a single step without finding some duty to fulfil; and

that every man is useful to society, even by means of his existence alone?

Hear me, thou rash young man! thou art dear to me. I commiserate thy errors. If the least sense of virtue still remains in thy breast, attend, and let me teach thee to be reconciled to life.—Whenever thou art tempted to quit it, say to thyself——"Let me at least do one good action before I die." Then go in search for one in a state of indigence, whom thou mayest relieve; for one under misfortunes, whom thou mayest comfort; for one under oppression, whom thou mayest defend. Introduce me to those unhappy wretches whom my rank keeps at a distance. Do not be afraid of misusing my purse, or my credit: make free with them; distribute my fortune; make me rich. If this consideration restrains you to-day, it will restrain you to-morrow; if to-morrow, it will restrain you all your life. If it has no power to restrain you, die! you are below my care.

LETTER CXVI.

FROM LORD B——.

I CANNOT, my dear friend, embrace you to-day, as I was in hopes I should; being detained two days longer at Kensington. It is the way of the court to be very busy doing nothing, and all affairs run in a constant succession without being dispatched. The business which has confined me here eight days, might have been concluded in two hours; but as the chief concern of the ministry is to preserve an air of business, they waste more time in putting me off than it would cost them to dispatch me. My impatience, which is rather too evident, does not contribute to shorten the delay. You know that the court is not suited to my turn. I find it more

intolerable since we have lived together, and I had rather a hundred times share your melancholy, than be pestered with the knaves which abound in this country.

Nevertheless, in conversing with these busy sluggards, a thought struck me with regard to you, and I only wait your consent to dispose of you to advantage. I perceive that, in struggling with your affliction, you suffer both from your uneasiness of mind, and from your resistance. If you are determined to live and overcome it, you have formed this resolution less in conformity to the dictates of reason and honour, than in compliance with your friends. But this is not enough; You must recover the relish of life to discharge its duties as you ought; for with so much indifference about every thing, you will succeed in nothing. We may both of us talk as we will, but reason alone will never restore you to your reason. It is necessary that a multiplicity of new and striking objects should in some measure withdraw you from that intention which your mind fixes solely on one object of its affections. To recover yourself, you must be detached from inward reflection, and nothing but the agitation of a busy life can restore you to serenity.

An opportunity offers for this purpose, which is not to be disregarded; a great and noble enterprise is on foot, and such a one as has not been equalled for ages. It depends on you to be a spectator and assistant in it. You will see the grandest sight which the eye of man ever beheld, and your turn for observation will be abundantly gratified. Your appointment will be honourable, and, with the talents you are master of, will only require courage and good health. You will find it attended with more danger than confinement, which will make it more agreeable to you; and, in few words, your engagement will not be for any long time. I cannot give you further information at present; because this

scheme, which is almost ripe for discovery, is nevertheless a secret, with which I am not acquainted in all its particulars. I will only add, that if you decline this lucky and extraordinary opportunity, you will, probably, never recover it again, and will regret it as long as you live.

I have ordered my servant, who is the bearer of this letter, to find you out wherever you are, and not to return without a line; for the affair requires dispatch, and I must give an answer before I leave this place.

LETTER CXVII.

ANSWER.

Do, my Lord, dispose of me; I will agree to whatever you propose. Till I am worthy to serve you, at least I claim the merit of obeying you.

LETTER CXVIII.

FROM LORD B——.

Since you approve of the thought I suggested, I will not delay a minute to acquaint you that every thing is concluded, and to explain to you the nature of the engagement I have entered into, in pursuance of the authority you gave me to make the agreement on your behalf.

You know that a squadron of five men of war is equipped at Plymouth, and that they are ready to set sail. The commodore is Mr. George Anson, a brave and experienced officer, and an old friend of mine. It is destined for the South-Sea, whither it is to sail through the Straits of Le Maire, and to come back by the East-Indies. You see,

therefore, that the object is no less than to make the tour of the world, an expedition which, it is imagined, will take up three years. I could have entered you as a volunteer; but to give you more importance among the crew, I have obtained the addition of a title for you, and you stand on the list in the capacity of engineer of the land-forces: this will be more suitable to you, because, having followed the bent of your genius from your first outset in the world, I know you made it your early study.

I propose to return to London to-morrow*, to present you to Mr. Anson within two days. In the mean time, take care to get your equipage ready, and provide yourself with books and instruments; for the embarkation is ready, and only waits for sailing orders. My dear friend, I hope that God will bring you back from this long voyage in full health of mind and body, and that at your return we shall meet never to part again.

LETTER CXIX.

TO MRS. ORBE.

My dear and lovely cousin, I am preparing to make the tour of the world; I am going into another hemisphere, in pursuit of that peace which I could not enjoy in this! Fool that I am! I am going to wander over the universe, without being able to find one place where my heart can rest. I am going to find a retreat from the world, where I may be at a

*I do not rightly understand this: Kensington not being above a mile and a half from London, the noblemen who go to court do not lie there; yet Lord B—— tells us he was obliged to stay there I know not how many days.

distance from you. But it becomes me to regard the will of a friend, a benefactor, a father. Without the smallest hopes of a cure, at least I will take pains for it; Eloisa and virtue require the sacrifice. In three hours time I shall be at the mercy of the winds; in three days I shall lose sight of Europe; in three months I shall be in unknown seas, raging with perpetual tempests; in three years perhaps . . . . . How dreadful is the thought of never seeing you more! Alas! the greatest danger is in my own breast; for, whatever may be my fate, I am resolved, I swear, that you shall see me worthy to appear in your sight, or you shall never behold me more.

Lord B——, who is on his return to Rome, will deliver this letter in his way, and acquaint you with all particulars concerning me. You are acquainted with his disposition, and you will easily guess at those circumstances which he does not choose to communicate. You was once no stranger to mine; therefore, you may likewise form some judgment of those things which I do not care to relate myself.

Your friend, I hear, has the happiness to be a mother as well as yourself. Ought she then to be . . . . . O inexorable Heaven! . . . . . O *my* mother! why did Heaven in its wrath grant you a son? . . . . .

I must conclude: I feel that I must. Farewell, ye pure and celestial souls! farewell, ye tender and inseparable friends, the best women on earth! Each of you is the only object worthy of the other's affections. May you mutually contribute to each other's happiness! Deign now and then to call to mind the memory of an unfortunate wretch, who only existed to share with you every sentiment of his soul, and who ceased to live the moment he was divided from you. If ever—— . . . . . I hear the signal, and the shouts of the sailors. The wind blows strong, and the sails are spread.

I must on board: I must be gone. Thou vast and immense sea, which, perhaps, wilt bury me beneath thy waves! Oh! that upon thy swelling surge I could recover that calm which has forsaken my troubled soul!

LETTER CXX.

FROM MRS. WOLMAR TO MRS. ORBE.

How tedious is your stay! This going backward and forward is very disagreeable. How many hours are lost before you return to the place where you ought to remain for ever, and, therefore, how much worse is it for you ever to go away! The idea of seeing you for so short a time takes from the pleasure of your company.—Do not you perceive, that by residing at your own house and mine alternately, you are in fact at home in neither, and cannot you contrive some means by which you may make your abode in both at once?

What are we doing, my dear cousin? How many precious moments we lose, when we have none to waste! Years steal upon us; youth begins to vanish; life slides away imperceptibly; its momentary bliss is in our possession, and we refuse to enjoy it! Do you recollect the time when we were yet girls, those early days so agreeable and delightful, which no other time of life affords, and which the mind with so much difficulty forgets? How often, when we were obliged to part for a few days, or even for a few hours, have we sadly embraced each other, and vowed that when we were our own mistresses we would never be asunder! We are now our own mistresses, and yet we pass one half of the year at a distance from each other. Is then our affection weaker? My dear

and tender friend, we are both sensible how much time, habit, and your kindness, have rendered our attachment more strong and indissoluble. As to myself, your absence daily becomes more insupportable, and I can no longer live for a moment without you. The progress of our friendship is more natural than it appears to be; it is founded not only on a similarity of character, but of condition. As we advance in years, our affections begin to centre in one point. We every day lose something that was dear to us, which we can never replace—Thus we perish by degrees, till at length, being wholly devoted to self-love, we lose life and sensibility, even before our existence ceases. But a susceptible mind arms itself with all its force against this anticipated death: when a chilliness begins to seize the extremities, it collects all the genial warmth of nature round its own centre; the more connexions it loses, the closer it cleaves to those which remain, and all its former ties are combined to attach it to the last object.

This is what, young as I am, I seem to experience. Ah! my dear, my poor heart has often been too susceptible of tender impressions! It was so early exhausted, that it grew old before its time; and so many different affections have absorbed it to that degree, that it has no room for any new attachments. You have known me in the successive capacities of a daughter, a friend, a mistress, a wife, and a mother. You know how every character has been dear to me! Some of these connections are utterly destroyed, others are weakened. My mother, my affectionate mother is no more; tears are the only tribute I can pay to her memory, and I do but half enjoy the most agreeable sensations of nature. As to love, it is wholly extinguished, it is dead for ever, and has left a vacancy in my heart which will never be filled up again. We have lost your good and worthy husband, whom I loved as the dear

part of yourself, and who was so well deserving of your friendship and tenderness. If my boys were grown up, maternal affection might supply these vacancies, but that affection, like all others, has need of participation, and what return can a mother expect from a child only four or five years old? Our children are dear to us long before they are sensible of our love, or capable of returning it; and yet how much we want to express the extravagance of our fondness to some one who can enter into our affection! My husband loves them, but not with that degree of sensibility I could wish; he is not intoxicated with fondness as I am! his tenderness for them is too rational: I would have it to be more lively and more like my own. In short, I want a friend, a mother who can be as extravagantly fond of my children, and her own, as myself. In a word the fondness of a mother makes the company of a friend more necessary to me, that I may enjoy the pleasure of talking continually about my children, without being troublesome. I feel double the pleasure in the caresses of my little Marcellinus, when I see that you share it with me. When I embrace your daughter, I fancy that I press you to my bosom. We have observed a hundred times, on seeing our little cherubs at play together, that the union of our affections has so united them, that we have not been able to distinguish to which of us they severally belonged.

This is not all: I have powerful reasons for desiring to have you always near me, and your absence is painful to me in more respects than one. Think on my aversion to all hypocrisy, and reflect on the continual reserve in which I have lived upwards of six years towards the man whom I love above all others in the world. My odious secret oppresses me more and more, and my duty to reveal it seems every day more indispensable. The more I am prompted by honour to disclose

it, the more I am obliged by prudence to conceal it. Consider what a horrid state it is, for a wife to carry mistrust, falsehood, and fear, even to her husband's arms; to be afraid of opening her heart to him who is master of it, and to conceal one half of my life, to ensure the peace of the other. Good God! from whom do I conceal my secret thoughts, and hide the recesses of a soul with which he has so much reason to be satisfied? From my Wolmar, my husband! and the most worthy husband with which Heaven ever rewarded the virtue of unsullied chastity. Having deceived him once, I am obliged to continue the deceit, and bear the mortification of finding myself unworthy of all the kindness he expresses.—My heart is afraid to receive any testimony of his esteem, his most tender caresses make me blush, and my conscience interprets all his marks of respect and attention into symptoms of reproach and disdain. It is a cruel pain constantly to harbour this remorse, which tells me that he mistakes the object of his esteem. Ah! if he but knew me, he would not use me thus tenderly! No, I cannot endure this horrid state: I am never alone with that worthy man, but I am ready to fall on my knees before him, to confess my fault, and to expire at his feet with grief and shame.

Nevertheless, the reasons which at first restrained me, acquire fresh strength every day, and every motive which might induce me to make the declaration, conspires to enjoin me silence. When I consider the peaceable and tranquil state of our family, I cannot reflect without horror what an irreparable disturbance might be occasioned by a single word. After six years passed in perfect union, shall I venture to disturb the peace of so good and discreet a husband, who has no other will than that of his happy wife, no other pleasure than to see order and tranquillity throughout his family? Shall I afflict with domestic broils an aged father, who ap-

pears to be so contented, and so delighted with the happiness of his daughter and his friend? Shall I expose my dear children, those lovely and promising infants, to have their education neglected and shamefully slighted, to become the melancholy victims of family discord, between a father inflamed with just indignation, tortured with jealousy, and an unfortunate and guilty mother, always bathed in tears? I know what M. Wolmar is, now he esteems his wife; but how do I know what he will be when he no longer regards her? Perhaps he seems calm and moderate, because his predominant passion has had no room to display itself. Perhaps he would be as violent in the impetuosity of his anger, as he is gentle and composed, now he has nothing to provoke him.

If I owe such regard to every one about me, is not something likewise due to myself? Does not a virtuous and regular course of life for six years obliterate, in some measure, the errors of youth, and am I still obliged to undergo the punishment of a failing which I have so long lamented? I confess, my dear cousin, that I look backwards with reluctance; the reflection humbles me to that degree, that it dispirits me, and I am too susceptible of shame, to endure the idea, without falling into a kind of despair. I must reflect on the time which has passed since my marriage, in order to recover myself. My present situation inspires me with a confidence, of which those disagreeable reflections would deprive me. I love to nourish in my breast these returning sentiments of honour; the rank of a wife and mother exalts my soul, and supports me against the remorse of my former condition. When I view my children and their father about me, I fancy that every thing breathes an air of virtue, and they banish from my mind the disagreeable remembrance of my former frailties. Their innocence is the security of mine;

they become dearer to me, by being the instruments of my reformation; and I think on the violation of honour with such horror, that I can scarce believe myself the same person who formerly was capable of forgetting its precepts. I perceive myself so different from what I was, so confirmed in my present state, that I am almost induced to consider what I have to declare, as a confession which does not concern me, and which I am not obliged to make.

Such is the state of anxiety and uncertainty in which I am continually fluctuating in your absence. Do you know what may be the consequence of this one day or other? My father is soon to set out for Berne, and is determined not to return till he has put an end to a tedious law-suit; not being willing to leave us the trouble of concluding it, and perhaps doubting our zeal in the prosecution of it. In the mean time, between his departure and his return, I shall be alone with my husband, and I perceive that it will then be impossible for me to keep the fatal secret any longer. When we have company, you know M. Wolmar often chooses to retire, and take a solitary walk: he chats with the peasants; he inquires into their situation; he examines the conditions of their grounds; and assists them, if they require it, both with his purse and his advice. But when we are alone, he never walks without me; he seldom leaves his wife and children, but enters into their little amusements with such an amiable simplicity, that on these occasions, I always feel a more than common tenderness for him. In these tender moments my reserve is in so much more danger, as he himself frequently gives me opportunities of throwing it aside, and has a hundred times held conversation with me which seemed to excite me to confidence. I perceive that, sooner or later, I must disclose my mind to him; but since you would have the confession concerted between us, and made with all the precaution which

discretion requires, return to me immediately, or I can answer for nothing.

My dear friend, I must conclude, and yet what I had to add is of such importance, that you must allow me a few words more. You are not only of service to me when I am with my children and my husband, but above all when I am alone with poor Eloisa: solitude is more dangerous, because it grows agreeable to me, and I court it without intending it. It is not, as you are sensible, that my heart still smarts with the pain of its former wounds—no, they are cured—I perceive that they are—I am very certain, I dare believe myself virtuous. I am under no apprehensions about the present: it is the time past which torments me. There are some reflections as dreadful as the original sensation; the recollection moves us; we are ashamed to find that we shed tears, and we do but weep the more. They are tears of compassion, regret, and repentance; love has no share in them: I no longer harbour the least spark of love; but I lament the mischiefs it has occasioned; I bewail the fate of a worthy man, who has been bereft of peace, and perhaps of life, by gratifying an indiscreet passion. Alas! he has undoubtedly perished in this long and dangerous voyage, which he undertook out of despair. If he was living, he would send us tidings from the farthest part of the world; near four years have elapsed since his departure. They say the squadron on board of which he is, has suffered a thousand disasters; that it hath lost three fourths of its crew; that several ships have gone to the bottom, and that no one can tell what has become of the rest. He is no more! he is no more! A secret foreboding tells me so. The unfortunate wretch has not been spared any more than so many others. The distresses of his voyage, and melancholy, still more fatal than all, have shortened his days. Thus vanishes every thing which glitters for a while on earth.

The reproach of having occasioned the death of a worthy man was all that was wanting to complete the torments of my conscience. With what a soul was he endued! how susceptible of the tenderest love! He deserved to live!

I try in vain to dissipate these melancholy ideas; but they return ever minute, in spite of me. Your friend requires your assistance, to enable her to banish, or to moderate them; and since I cannot forget this unfortunate man, I had rather talk of him with you, than think of him by myself.

You see how many reasons concur to make your company continually necessary to me. If you, who have been more discreet and fortunate, are not moved by the same reasons, yet does not your inclination persuade you of the same necessity? If it is true that you will never marry again, having so little satisfaction in your family, what house can be more convenient for you than mine? For my part, I am in pain, as I know what you endure in your own! for, notwithstanding your dissimulation, I am no stranger to your manner of living, and I am not to be duped by those gay airs which you affected to display at Clarens. You have often reproached me with my failings; and I have a very great one to reproach you with in your turn; which is, that your grief is too solitary and confined. You get into a corner to indulge your affliction, as if you were ashamed to weep before your friend. Clara, I do not like this. I am not ungenerous like you; I do not condemn your tears. I would not have you cease at the end of two or ten years, or while you live, to honour the memory of so tender a husband; but I blame you, that after having passed the best of your days in weeping with your Eloisa, you rob her of the pleasure of weeping in her turn with you, and of washing away, by more honourable tears, the scandal of those which she

shed in your bosom. If you are ashamed of your grief, you are a stranger to real affliction! If you find a kind of pleasure in it, why will you not let me partake of it? Are you ignorant that a participation of affections communicates a soft and affecting quality to melancholy, which content never feels? And was not friendship particularly designed to alleviate the evils of the wretched, and lessen their pains?

Such, my dear, are the reflections you ought to indulge; to which I must add, that when I propose your coming to live with me, I make the proposal no less in my husband's name than my own. He has often expressed his surprise, and even been offended, that two such intimates as we should live asunder: he assures me that he has told you so, and he is not a man who talks inadvertently. I do not know what resolution you will take with respect to these proposals; I have reason to hope that it will be such as I could wish. However it be, mine is fixed and unalterable.—I have not forgotten the time when you would have followed me to England. My incomparable friend! it is now my turn. You know my dislike of the town, my taste for the country, for rural occupations, and how strongly a residence of three years has attached me to my house at Clarens. You are no stranger likewise to the trouble of removing a whole family, and you are sensible that it would be abusing my father's good-nature to oblige him to move so often. Therefore, if you will not leave your family, and come to govern mine, I am determined to take a house at Lausanne, where we will all live with you.—Prepare yourself, therefore; every thing requires it; my inclination, my duty, my happiness. The security of my honour, the recovery of my reason, my condition, my husband, my children, myself, I owe all to you; I am indebted to you for all the blessings I enjoy; I see nothing but what reminds me of your goodness,

and without you I am nothing. Come then, my much loved friend, my guardian angel; come and enjoy the work of your own hands; come and gather the fruits of your benevolence. Let us have but one family, as we have but one soul to cherish it; you shall superintend the education of my sons, and I will take care of your daughter; we will share the maternal duties between us, and make our pleasure double. We will raise our minds together to the contemplation of that Being, who purified mine by means of your endeavours; and having nothing more to hope for in this life, we will quietly wait for the next, in the bosom of innocence and friendship.

LETTER CXXI.

ANSWER.

Good Heaven! my dear cousin, how I am delighted with your letter! Thou lovely preacher!..... Lovely indeed: but in the preaching strain nevertheless. What a charming peroration! A perfect model of ancient oratory. The Athenian architect!..... That florid speaker!..... You remember him..... In your old Plutarch..... Pompous descriptions, superb temple ..... When he had finished his harangue, comes another; a plain man; with a grave, sober, and unaffected air ..... who answered as your cousin Clara might do..... with a low, hollow, and deep tone ..... *All that he has said, I will do.*—Here he ended, and the assembly rang with applause! Peace to the man of words. My dear, we may be considered in the light of these two architects; and the temple in question is that of Friendship.

But let us recapitulate all the fine things you have said to me. First, that we loved each other; secondly, that my company was necessary to you; thirdly, that yours was necessary to me, likewise; and lastly, that as it was in our power to live together the rest of our days, we ought to do it. And you have really discovered all this without a guide. In truth, thou art a woman of vast eloquence! Well, but let me tell you how I was employed on my part, while you was composing this sublime epistle. After that, I will leave you to judge, whether what you say, or what I do, is most to the purpose.

I had no sooner lost my husband, than you supplied the vacancy he had left in my heart. While he was living, he shared my affections with you: when he was gone, I was yours entirely, and, as you observe, with respect to the conformity of friendship and maternal affection, my daughter was an additional tie to unite us. I not only determined, from that time, to pass my days with you, but I formed a more enlarged plan. The more effectually to blend our two families into one, I proposed, on a supposition that all circumstances prove agreeable, to marry my daughter some day or other to your eldest son, and the name of husband, assumed in jest, seemed to be a lucky omen of his taking it one day in earnest.

With this view, I endeavoured immediately to put an end to the trouble of a contested inheritance; and finding that my circumstances enabled me to sacrifice some part of my claim in order to settle the rest, I thought of nothing but placing my daughter's fortune in some sure funds, where it might be secure from any apprehensions of a law suit. You know that I am whimsical in most things; my whim in this was to surprize you. I intended to come into your room one morning early, with my child in one hand, and the parchment

in the other; and to have presented them both to you, with a fine compliment on committing to your care the mother, the daughter, and their effects, that is to say, my child's fortune. Govern her, I proposed to have said, as best suits the interest of your son; for, from henceforwards, it is your concern and his; for my own part, I shall trouble myself about her no longer.

Full of this pleasing idea, it was necessary for me to open my mind to somebody who might assist me to execute my project. Guess now whom I chose for a confidant? One M. Wolmar. Should you not know him? "My husband, cousin." Yes, your husband, cousin. The very man from whom you make such a difficulty of concealing a secret, which it is of consequence to him never to know, is he who has kept a secret from you, the discovery of which would have given you so much pleasure. This was the true subject of all that mysterious conversation between us, about which you used to banter us with so much humour. You see what hypocrites these husbands are. Is it not very droll in them to accuse us of dissimulation? But I required much more of your husband. I perceived that you had the same plan which I had in view, but you kept it more to yourself, as one who did not care to communicate her thoughts, till she was led to the discovery. With an intent, therefore, to make your surprise more agreeable, I would have had him, when you proposed our living together, to have seemed as if he disapproved of your eagerness, and to have given his consent with reluctance. To this he made me an answer, which I well remember, and which you ought never to forget: for since the first existence of husbands, I doubt whether any one of them ever made such an answer before. It was as follows: "My "dear little cousin, I know Eloisa.....I know her well "....better than she imagines, perhaps,.....her gene-

"rosity of heart is so great, that what she desires, ought not "to be refused, and her sensibility is too strong to bear a de- "nial, without being afflicted. During these five years that "we have been married, I do not know that I have given "her the least uneasiness; and I hope to die without ever "being the cause of her feeling a moment's inquietude." Cousin, reflect on this: this is the husband whose peace of mind you are incessantly meditating to disturb.

For my part, I had less delicacy, or more gentleness of disposition, and I so naturally diverted the conversation to which your affection so frequently led you, that as you could not tax me with coldness or indifference towards you, you took it into your head that I had a second marriage in view, and that I loved you better than any thing, except a husband. You see, my dear child, your inmost thoughts do not escape me. I guess your meaning, I penetrate your designs; I enter into the bottom of your soul, and for that reason I have always adored you. This suspicion, which so opportunely led you into a mistake, appeared to me well worth encouraging. I took upon me to play the part of the coquettish widow, which I acted so well as to deceive even you. It is a part for which I have more talents than inclination. I skilfully employed that piquant air which I know how to put on, and with which I have entertained myself in making a jest of more than one young coxcomb. You have been absolutely the dupe of my affectation, and you thought me in haste to supply the place of a man, to whom of all others it would be most difficult to fit a successor. But I am too ingenuous to play the counterfeit long, and your apprehensions were soon removed. But to confirm you the more, I will explain to you my real sentiments on that head.

I have told you a hundred times, when I was a maid that I was never designed for a wife. Had my determination de-

pended on myself alone, I should never have married. But our sex cannot purchase liberty but by slavery; and, before we can become our own mistresses, we must begin by being servants. Though my father did not confine me, I was not without uneasiness in my family. To free myself from that vexation, therefore, I married Mr. Orbe. He was such a worthy man, and loved me with such tenderness, that I most sincerely loved him in my turn. Experience gave me a more advantageous opinion of marriage than I had conceived of it, and effaced those ill impressions I had received from Challiot. Mr. Orbe made me happy, and did not repent his endeavours. I should have discharged my duty with any other, but I should have vexed him, and I am sensible that nothing but so good a husband could have made me a tolerable wife. Would you think that even this afforded me matter of complaint? My dear, we loved each other too affectionately; we were never gay. A slighter friendship would have been more sprightly; I should even have preferred it; and I think I should have chosen to have lived with less content, if I could have laughed oftener.

Add to this, that the particular circumstances of your situation gave me uneasiness. I need not remind you of the dangers to which an unruly passion exposed you. I reflect on them with horror. If you had only hazarded your life, perhaps I might have retained some remains of gaiety; but terror and grief pierced my soul, and till I saw you married, I did not enjoy one moment of real pleasure. You are no stranger to my affliction at that time; you felt it. It had great influence over your good disposition, and I shall always bless those fortunate tears, which were probably the occasion of your return to virtue.

In this manner I passed all the time that I lived with my husband. Since it has pleased the Almighty to take him from

me, judge whether I can hope to find another so much to my mind, and whether I have any temptation to make the experiment? No, cousin, matrimony is too serious a state for me; its gravity does not suit with my humour; it makes me dull, and sits awkwardly upon me; not to mention that all constraint whatever is intolerable to me. Consider you who know me, what charms can an attachment have in my eyes, during which, for seven years together, I have not laughed seven times heartily! I do not propose, like you, to turn matron at eight-and-twenty. I find myself a smart little widow, likely to get a husband still, and I think that if I were a man, I should have no objection to such a one as myself. But to marry again, cousin! Hear me; I sincerely lament my poor husband; I would have given up one half of my days, to have passed the other half with him; and, nevertheless, could he return to life, I should take him again for no other reason, than because I had taken him before.

I have declared to you my real intentions. If I have not been able to put them in execution, notwithstanding M. Wolmar's kind endeavours, it is because difficulties seem to increase, as my zeal to surmount them strengthens. But my zeal will always gain the ascendancy, and, before the summer is over, I hope to return to you for the remainder of my days.

I must now vindicate myself from the reproach of concealing my uneasiness, and choosing to weep alone: I do not deny it; and this is the way I spend the most agreeable time I pass here. I never enter my house, but I perceive some traces which remind me of him who made it agreeable to me. I cannot take a step, I cannot view a single object, without perceiving some signs of his tenderness and goodness of heart; and would you have my mind to be unaffected?

When I am here, I am sensible of nothing but the loss I have sustained. When I am near you, I view all the comfort I have left. Can you make your influence over my disposition a crime in me? If I weep in your absence, and laugh in your company, whence proceeds the difference? Ungrateful woman! it is because you alleviate all my afflictions, and I cannot grieve while I enjoy your society.

You have said a great deal in favour of our long friendship; but I cannot pardon you for omitting a circumstance, that does me most honour; which is, that I love you, though you eclipse me! Eloisa, you were born to rule. Your empire is more despotic than any in the world. It extends even over the will, and I am sensible of it more than any one. How happens it, my Eloisa? We are both in love with virtue; honour is equally dear to us; our talents are the same; I have very near as much spirit as you; and am not less handsome: I am sensible of all this, and yet, notwithstanding all, you prescribe to me, you overcome me, you cast me down, your genius crushes mine, and I am nothing before you. Even while you were engaged in an attachment with which you reproached yourself, and that I, who had not copied your failing, might have taken the lead in my turn, yet the ascendancy still remained in you. The frailty I condemned in you appeared to me almost in the light of a virtue; I could scarce forbear admiring in you what I should have censured in another. In short, even at that time, I never accosted you without a sensible emotion of involuntary respect; and it is certain, that nothing but your gentleness and affability of manners could entitle me to the rank of your friend: by nature, I ought to be your servant. Explain this mystery if you can; for my part, I am at a loss how to solve it.

But, after all, I do in some measure conceive the reason, and I believe that I have explained it before now. The

reason is, that your disposition enlivens every one round you, and gives them a kind of new existence, for which they are bound to adore you, since they derive it entirely from you. It is true, I have done you some signal services; you have so often acknowledged them, that it is impossible for me to forget them. I cannot deny but that, without my assistance, you had been utterly undone. But what did I do, more than return the obligation I owed you? Is it possible to have a long acquaintance with you, without finding one's mind impressed with the charms of virtue, and the delights of friendship? Do not you know that you have power to arm in your defence every one who approaches you; and that I have no advantage whatever over others, but that of being, like the guards of Sesostris, of the same age and sex, and of having been brought up with you? However it be, it is some comfort to Clara, that though she is of less estimation than Eloisa, yet, without Eloisa, she would be of less value still; and, in short, to tell you the truth, I think that we stood in great need of each other, and that we should both have been losers if fate had parted us.

I am chiefly concerned, lest, while my affairs detain me here, you should discover your secret, which you are every minute ready to disclose. Consider, I entreat you, that there are solid and powerful reasons for concealing it, and that nothing but a mistaken principle can tempt you to reveal it. Besides, our suspicion that it is no longer a secret to him who is most interested in the discovery, is an additional argument against making any declaration without the greatest circumspection. Perhaps your husband's reserve may serve as an example and a lesson to us: for in such cases there is very often a great difference between pretending to be ignorant of a thing, and being obliged to know it.

Stay, therefore, I beseech you, till we consult once more on this affair. If your apprehensions were well grounded, and your lamented friend was no more, the best resolution you could take, would be to let your history and his misfortunes be buried together. If he is alive, as I hope he is, the case may be different; but let us wait till we are sure of the event. In every state of the case, do not you think that you ought to pay some regard to the advice of an unfortunate wretch, whose evils all spring from you?

With respect to the danger of solitude, I conceive, and cannot condemn your fears, though I am persuaded that they are ill-founded. Your past terrors have made you fearful; but I presage better of the time present, and you would be less apprehensive, if you had more reason to be so. But I cannot approve of your anxiety with regard to the fate of our poor friend. Now your affections have taken a different turn, believe me, he is as dear to me as to yourself. Nevertheless, I have forebodings quite contrary to yours, and more agreeable to reason. Lord B—— has heard from him twice, and wrote to me on the receipt of the last letter, to acquaint me that he was in the South-Seas, and had already escaped all the dangers you apprehend. You know all this as well as I, and yet you are as uneasy as if you were a stranger to these particulars. But there is a circumstance you are ignorant of, and of which I must inform you; it is, that the ship on which he is aboard was seen two months ago off the Canaries, making sail for Europe. This is the account my father received from Holland, which he did not fail to transmit to me; for it his custom to be more punctual in informing me concerning public affairs, than in acquainting me with his own private concerns. My heart tells me that it will not be long before we hear news of our philosopher, and that your

tears will be dried up, unless, after having lamented him as dead, you should weep to find him alive. But, thank God, you are no longer in danger from your former weakness.

Deh! fosse or qui quel miser por un poco,
Ch' e gia di piangere e di viver lasso!

Alas! what fears should heighten your concern,
So us'd in listless solitude to mourn!

This is the sum of my answer. Your affectionate friend proposes and shares with you the agreeable expectation of a lasting re-union. You find that you are neither the first, nor the only author of this project; and that the execution of it is more forward than you imagine. Have patience, therefore, my dear friend, for this summer. It is better to delay our meeting for some time, than to be under the necessity of parting again.

Well, good madam, have not I been as good as my word, and is not my triumph complete? Come, fall on your knees, kiss this letter with respect, and humbly acknowledge, that, once in her life, at least, Eloisa Wolmar has been outdone in friendship.

LETTER CXXII.

TO MRS. ORBE

My dear cousin, my benefactress, my friend! I come from the extremities of the earth, and bring a heart still full of affection for you. I have crossed the line four times; have traversed the two hemispheres; have seen the four quarters of the globe; its diameter has been between us: I have

been quite round it, and yet could not escape from you one moment. It is in vain to fly from the object of our adoration; the image, more fleet than the winds, pursues us from the end of the world; and, wherever we transport ourselves, we bear with us the idea by which we are animated. I have endured a great deal; I have seen others suffer more. How many unhappy wretches have I seen perish! Alas! they rated life at a high price! And yet I survived them..... Perhaps my condition was less to be pitied; the miseries of my companions affected me more than my own. I am wretched here (said I to myself,) but there is a corner of the earth where I am happy and tranquil; and the prospect of felicity, beside the lake of Geneva, made me amends for what I suffered on the ocean. I have the pleasure, on my return, to have my hopes confirmed: Lord B—— informs me, that you both enjoy health and peace; and that if you in particular have lost the agreeable distinction of a wife, you nevertheless retain the title of a friend and mother, which may contribute to your happiness.

I am at present too much in haste to send you a detail of my voyage in this letter. I dare hope that I shall soon have a more convenient opportunity; meantime I must be content to give you a slight sketch, rather to excite than gratify your curiosity. I have been near four years in making this immense tour, and returned in the same ship in which I set sail; the only one of the whole squadron, which we have brought back to England.

I have seen South-America, that vast continent, which, for want of arms, has been obliged to submit to the Europeans, who have made it a desert, in order to secure their dominion. I have seen the coasts of Brasil from whence Lisbon and London draw their treasures, and where the miserable natives tread upon gold and diamonds, without daring to lay hands

out them for their own use. I crossed, in mild weather, those stormy seas under the Antarctic circle, and met with the most horrible tempests in the Pacific Ocean.

E in mar dubbioso sotto ignoto polo
Provai l' onde fallaci, e 'l vento infido.

Have brav'd the unknown seas, where, near the pole,
Blow faithless winds, and waves deceitful roll.

I have seen, at a distance, the abode of those supposed giants, who are no otherwise greater than the rest of their species, than as they are more courageous, and who maintain their independence more by a life of simplicity and frugality, than by their extraordinary stature. I made a residence of three months in a desert and delightful island, which afforded an agreeable and lively representation of the primitive beauty of nature, and which seems to be fixed at the extremity of the world, to serve as an asylum to innocence and persecuted love; but the greedy European indulges his brutal disposition, in preventing the peaceful Indian from residing there, and does justice on himself, by not making it his own abode.

I have seen, in the rivers of Mexico and Peru, the same scenes as at Brasil; I have seen the few wretched inhabitants, the sad remains of two powerful nations, loaded with irons, ignominy, and misery, weeping in the midst of their precious metals, and reproaching Heaven for having lavished such treasures upon them. I have seen the dreadful conflagration of a whole city, which perished in the flames, without having made any resistance or defence. Such is the right of war among the intelligent, humane, and refined Europeans! They are not satisfied with doing the enemy all the mischief from whence they can reap any advantage, but

they reckon as clear gain all the destruction they can make among his possessions. I have coasted along almost the whole western part of America, not without being struck with admiration, on beholding fifteen hundred leagues of coast, and the greatest sea in the world, under the dominion of a single potentate, who may be said to keep the keys of one hemisphere.

After having crossed this vast sea, I beheld a new scene on the other continent. I have seen the most numerous and most illustrious nation in the world in subjection to a handful of banditti; I have had near intercourse with this famous people, and I do not wonder that they are slaves.—As often conquered as attacked, they have always been a prey to the first invader, and possibly will be so to the end of the world. They are well suited to their servile state, since they have not the courage even to complain. They are learned, lazy, hypocritical, and deceitful: they talk a great deal, without saying any thing to the purpose; they are full of spirit without any genius; they abound in signs, but are barren in ideas; they are polite, full of compliments, dexterous, crafty, and knavish; they comprise all the duties of life in trifles; all morality in grimace; and have no other idea of humanity, than what consists in bows and salutations. I landed upon a second desert island, more unknown, more delightful still than the first, and where the most cruel accident had like to have confined us for ever. I was the only one, perhaps, whom so agreeable an exile did not terrify: am I not doomed to be an exile every where? In this place of terror and delight I saw the attempts of human industry to disengage a civilized being from a solitude where he wants nothing, and plunge him into an abyss of new necessities.

On the vast ocean, where one would imagine men would be glad to meet with their own species, I have seen two great

ships sail up to each other, join, attack, and fight together with fury, as if that immense space was too little for either of them. I have seen them discharge flames and bullets against each other. In a fight which was not of long duration, I have seen the picture of hell. I have heard the triumphant shouts of the conqueror drown the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. I blushed to receive my share of an immense plunder; but received it in the nature of a trust, and as it was taken from the wretched, to the wretched it shall be restored.

I have seen Europe transported to the extremities of Africa, by the labours of that avaricious, patient, and industrious people, who by time and perseverance have surmounted difficulties which all the heroism of other nations could never overcome. I have seen those immense and miserable countries, which seem destined to no other purpose than to cover the earth with herds of slaves. At their vile appearance, I turned away my eyes, out of disdain, horror, and pity; and on beholding one fourth part of my fellow creatures transformed into beasts, for the service of the rest, I could not forbear lamenting that I was a man.

Lastly, I beheld, in my fellow travellers, a bold and intrepid people, whose freedom and example retrieved, in my opinion, the honour of the species; a people who despised pain and death, and who dreaded nothing but hunger and disquiet. In their commander, I beheld a captain, a soldier, a pilot, a prudent and great man, and to say still more perhaps, a friend worthy of Lord B——. But, throughout the whole world, I have never met with any resemblance of Clara Orbe, or Eloisa Etange, or found one who could recompense a heart truly sensible of their worth for the loss of their society.

How shall I speak of my cure? It is from you that I must

learn how far it is perfect. Do I return more free and more discreet than I departed? I dare believe that I do, and yet I cannot affirm it. The same image has constant possession of my heart; you know how impossible it is for me ever to efface it; but her dominion over me is more worthy of her, and, if I do not deceive myself, she holds the same empire in my heart as in your own. Yes, my dear cousin, her virtue has subdued me; I am now, with regard to her, nothing more than a most sincere and tender friend; my adoration of her is of the same nature with yours; or rather, my affections do not seem to be weakened, but rectified; and, however nicely I examine, I find them to be as pure as the object which inspires them. What can I say more, till I am put to the proof, by which I may be able to form a right judgment of myself? I am honest and sincere; I will be what I ought to be; but how shall I answer for my affections, when I have so much reason to mistrust them? Have I power over the past? How can I avoid recollecting a thousand passions which have formerly distracted me? How shall my imagination distinguish what is, from what has been? And how shall I consider her as a friend, whom I never yet saw but as a mistress? Whatever you may think of the secret motive of my eagerness, it is honest and rational, and merits your approbation. I will answer beforehand, at least for my intentions. Permit me to see you, and examine me yourself, or allow me to see Eloisa, and I shall then know my own heart.

I am to attend Lord B—— into Italy. Shall I pass close by your house, and not see you? Do you think this possible? Alas! if you are so cruel to require it, you ought not to be obeyed! But why should you desire it? Are you not the same Clara, as kind and compassionate as you are virtuous and discreet, who condescended from her infancy to love me, and who ought to love me still more, now that I am indebted

to her for every thing* ? No, my dear and lovely friend, such a cruel denial will not become you; nor will it be just to me: it shall not put the finishing stroke to my misery. Once more, once more in my life, I will lay my heart at your feet. I will see you, you shall consent to an interview. I will see Eloisa likewise, and she too shall give her consent. You are both of you too sensible of my regard for her. Can you believe me capable of making this request, if I found myself unworthy to appear in her presence? She has long since bewailed the effects of her charms; ah! let her for once behold the fruits of her virtue!

P. S.—Lord B——'s affairs detain him here for some time: if I may be allowed to see you, why should not I get the start of him, to be with you the sooner?

LETTER CXXIII.

FROM MR. WOLMAR.

THOUGH we are not yet acquainted, I am commanded to write to you. The most discreet and most beloved wife has lately disclosed her heart to her happy husband. He thinks you worthy to have been the object of her affections, and he makes you an offer of his house. Peace and innocence reign in this mansion; you will meet with friendship, hospitality, esteem, and confidence. Examine your heart, and if you find

* What great obligations has he to her, who occasioned all the misfortunes of his life?—Yes, mistaken querist! he is indebted to her for the honour, the virtue, and peace of his beloved Eloisa: he owes her every thing.

nothing there to deter you, come without any apprehensions. You will not depart from him, without leaving behind you at least one friend, by name

WOLMAR.

P. S.—Come, my friend, we expect you with eagerness. I hope I need not fear a denial.

ELOISA.

LETTER CXXIV.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

In which the preceding Letter was inclosed.

WELCOME, welcome, a thousand times, dear St. Preux! for I intend that you shall retain that name, at least among us. I suppose it will be sufficient to tell you, that you will not be excluded, unless you mean to exclude yourself. When you find, by the inclosed letter, that I have done more than you required of me, you will learn to put more confidence in your friends, and not to reproach them on account of those inquietudes which they participate when they are under the necessity of making you uneasy. Mr. Wolmar has a desire to see you; he makes you an offer of his house, his friendship, and his advice; this is more than requisite to quiet my apprehensions with regard to your journey, and I should injure myself, if I mistrusted you one moment. Mr. Wolmar goes farther, he pretends to accomplish your cure, and he says that neither Eloisa, you, nor I, can be perfectly happy till it is complete. Though I have great confidence in his wisdom, and more in your virtue, yet I cannot answer for the success of this undertaking. This I know, that, con-

sidering the disposition of his wife, the pains he proposes to take is out of pure generosity to you.

Come then, my worthy friend, in all the security of an honest heart, and satisfy the eagerness with which we all long to embrace you, and to see you easy and contented; come to your native land, and in the midst of your friends rest yourself after all your travels, and forget all the hardships you have undergone. The last time you saw me, I was a grave matron, and my friend was on the brink of the grave; but now, as she is well, and I am once more single, you will find me as gay and almost as handsome as ever. One thing, however, is very certain, that I am not altered with respect to you, and you may travel many times round the world, and not find one who has so sincere a regard for you as your, &c.

LETTER CXXV.

TO LORD B——.

Just risen from my bed: 'tis yet the dead of night. I cannot rest a moment. My heart is so transported, that I can scarce confine it within me. You, my Lord, who have so often rescued me from despair, shall be the worthy confidant of the first pleasure I have tasted for many a year.

I have seen her, my Lord! my eyes have beheld her! I have heard her voice. I have pressed her hand with my lips. She recollected me; she received me with joy; she called me her friend, her dear friend; she admitted me into her house: I am happier than ever I was in my life. I lodge under the same roof with her, and while I am writing to you, we are scarce thirty paces asunder.

My ideas are too rapid to be expressed; they crowd upon me all at once, and naturally impede each other. I must

pause a while to digest my narrative into some kind of method.

After so long an absence, I had scarce given way to the first transports of my heart, while I embraced you as a friend, my deliverer, and my father, before you thought of taking a journey to Italy. You made me wish for it, in hopes of relief from the burden of being useless to you. As you could not immediately dispatch the affairs which detained you in London, you proposed my going first, that I might have more time to wait for you here. I begged leave to come hither; I obtained it, set out, and though Eloisa made the first advances towards an interview, yet the pleasing reflection that I was going to meet her was checked by the regret of leaving you. My Lord, we are now even; this single sentiment has cancelled my obligations to you.

I need not tell you that my thoughts were all the way taken up with the object of my journey; but I must observe one thing, that I began to consider that same object, which had never quitted my imagination, quite in another point of view. Till then I used to recall Eloisa to my mind, sparkling, as formerly, with all the charms of youth. I had always beheld her lovely eyes enlivened by that passion with which she inspired me. Every feature which I admired, seemed, in my opinion, to be a surety of my happiness. My affection was so interwoven with the idea of her person, that I could not separate them. Now I was going to see Eloisa married, Eloisa a mother, Eloisa indifferent! I was disturbed when I reflected how much an interval of eight years might have impaired her beauty. She had had the small-pox, she was altered, how great might that alteration be! My imagination obstinately refused to allow any blemish in that lovely face. I reflected likewise on the expected interview between us, and what kind of reception I might expect.

The first meeting presented itself to my mind under a thousand different appearances, and this momentary idea crossed my imagination a thousand times a day.

When I perceived the top of the hills, my heart beat violently, and told me, There she is! I was affected in the same manner at sea, on viewing the coasts of Europe. I felt the same emotions at Meillerie, when I discovered the house of the Baron de Etange. The world, in my imagination, is divided only into two regions, *that* where she is, and *that* where she is not. The former dilates as I remove from her, and contracts when I approach her, as a spot where I am destined never to arrive. It is at present confined to the walls of her chamber. Alas! that place alone is inhabited; all the rest of the universe is an empty space.

The nearer I drew to Switzerland, the more I was agitated. That instant in which I discovered the lake of Geneva from the heights of Jura, was a moment of rapture and ecstasy. The sight of my country, that beloved country, where a deluge of pleasures had overflowed my heart; the pure and wholesome air of the Alps; the gentle breeze of the country, more sweet than the perfumes of the East; that rich and fertile spot, that unrivalled landscape, the most beautiful that ever struck the eye of man, that delightful abode, to which I found nothing comparable in the vast tour of the globe: the aspect of a free and happy people; the mildness of the season, the serenity of the climate; a thousand pleasing recollections, which recalled to my mind the pleasures I had enjoyed: all these circumstances together threw me into a kind of transport which I cannot describe, and seemed to collect the enjoyment of my whole life into one happy moment. Having crossed the lake, I felt a new impression, of which I had no idea. It was a certain emotion of fear, which checked my heart, and disturbed me in spite of all my endeavours. This

dread, of which I could not discover the cause, increased as I drew nearer to the town; it abated my eagerness to get thither, and rose to such a height, that my expedition gave me as much uneasiness as my delay had occasioned me before. When I came to Vevai, I felt a sensation which was very far from being agreeable. I was seized with a violent palpitation, which stopped my breath, so that I spoke with a trembling and broken accent. I could scarce make myself understood when I inquired for M. Wolmar; for I durst not mention his wife. They told me he lived at Clarens. This information eased my breast from a pressure equal to five hundred weight, and considering the two leagues I had to travel farther as a kind of respite, I was rejoiced at a circumstance which at any other time would have made me uneasy; but I learnt with concern that Mrs. Orbe was at Lausanne. I went into an inn to recruit my strength, but could not swallow a morsel: and when I attempted to drink, I was almost suffocated, and could not empty a glass but at several sips. When I saw the horses put to, my apprehensions were doubled. I believe I should have given any thing in the world to have had one of the wheels broken by the way. I no longer saw Eloisa: my disturbed imagination presented nothing but confused objects before me; my soul was in a general tumult. I had experienced grief and despair, and should have preferred them to that horrible state. In a few words, I can assure you, that I never in my life underwent such cruel agitation as I suffered in this little way, and I am persuaded that I could not have supported it a whole day.

When I arrived, I ordered the chaise to stop at the gate, and finding that I was not in a condition to walk, I sent the postillion to acquaint M. Wolmar that a stranger wanted to speak with him. He was taking a walk with his wife. They were acquainted with the message, and came round another

way, while I kept my eyes fixed on the avenue, and waited in a kind of trance, in expectation of seeing somebody come from thence.

Eloisa had no sooner perceived me than she recollected me. In an instant, she saw me, she shrieked, she ran, she leaped into my arms. At the sound of her voice I started, I revived, I saw her, I felt her. O my Lord! O my friend! I cannot speak. . . . Her look, her shriek, her manner inspired me with confidence, courage, and strength in an instant. In her arms I felt warmth, and breathed new life. A sacred transport kept us for some time closely embraced in deep silence; and it was not till after we recovered from this agreeable delirium that our voices broke forth in confused murmurs, and our eyes intermingled tears. M. Wolmar was present; I knew he was, I saw him, but what was I capable of seeing? No, though the whole universe had been united against me; though a thousand torments had surrounded me, I would not have detached my heart from the least of those caresses, those tender offerings of a pure and sacred friendship, which we will bear with us to Heaven.

When the violent impetuosity of our first meeting began to abate, Mrs. Wolmar took me by the hand, and turning towards her husband she said to him, with a certain air of candour and innocence which instantly affected me, "Though he is my old acquaintance, I do not present him to you, but I receive him from you, and he will hereafter enjoy my friendship no longer than he is honoured with yours."—"If new friends (said M. Wolmar, embracing me) express less natural ardour than those of long standing, yet they will grow old in their turn, and will not yield to any in affection." I received his embraces; but my heart had quite exhausted itself, and I was entirely passive.

After this short scene was over, I observed, by a side-

glance, that they had put up my chaise, and taken off my trunk. Eloisa held by my arm, and I went with them towards the house, almost overwhelmed with pleasure, to find they were determined I should remain their guest.

It was then, that upon a more calm contemplation of that lovely face, which I imagined might have grown homely, I saw with an agreeable, yet sad surprise, that she was really more beautiful and sparkling than ever. Her charming features are now more regular; she is grown rather fatter, which is an addition to the resplendent fairness of her complexion. The small-pox has left some slight marks on her cheeks scarce perceptible. Instead of that mortifying bashfulness which formerly used to make her cast her eyes downwards, you may perceive in her chaste looks the security of virtue allied with gentleness and sensibility; her countenance, though not less modest, is less timid; an air of greater freedom, and more liberal grace, has succeeded that constrained carriage which was compounded of shame and tenderness; and if a sense of her failing rendered her then more bewitching, a consciousness of her purity now renders her more celestial.

We had scarce entered the parlour, when she disappeared, and returned in a minute. She did not come alone. Whom do you think she brought with her? Her children! Those two lovely little ones, more beauteous than the day; in whose infant faces you might trace all the charms and features of their mother. How was I agitated at this sight! It is neither to be described nor conceived. A thousand different emotions seized me at once. A thousand cruel and delightful reflections divided my heart. What a lovely sight! What bitter regrets! I found myself distracted with grief, and transported with joy. I saw, if I may be allowed the expression, the dear object of my affections multiplied before

me. Alas! I perceived at the same time too convincing a proof that I had no longer any interest in her, and my losses seemed to be multiplied with her increase.

She led them towards me. "Behold (said she, with an affecting tone, that pierced my soul) behold the children of your friend; they will hereafter be your friends. Henceforward I hope you will be theirs." And immediately the two little creatures ran eagerly to me, took me by the hand, and so overwhelmed me with their innocent caresses, that every motion of my soul centered in tenderness. I took them both in my arms, and pressing them against my throbbing breast, "Dear and lovely little creatures (said I, with a sigh) you have an arduous task to perform. May you resemble the authors of your being; may you imitate their virtues; and by your own, hereafter administer comfort to their unfortunate friends." Mrs. Wolmar in rapture threw herself round my neck a second time, and seemed disposed to repay me, by *her* embraces, those caresses which *I* had bestowed on her two sons. But how different was this from our first embrace! I perceived the difference with astonishment. It was the mother of a family whom I now embraced. I saw her surrounded by her husband and children: and the scene struck me with awe. I discovered an air of dignity in her countenance, which had not affected me till now: I found myself obliged to pay her a different kind of respect; her familiarity was almost uneasy to me; lovely as she appeared to me, I could have kissed the hem of her garment with a better grace than I saluted her cheek. In a word, from that moment I perceived that either she or I were no longer the same, and I began in earnest to have a good opinion of myself.

M. Wolmar at length took me by the hand, and conducted me to the apartment which had been prepared for me. "This

(said he, as he entered) is your apartment: it is not destined to the use of a stranger: it shall never belong to another, and hereafter, if you do not occupy it, it shall remain empty." You may judge whether such a compliment was not agreeable to me; but as I had not yet deserved it, I could not hear it without confusion. M. Wolmar, however, spared me the trouble of an answer. He invited me to take a turn in the garden. His behaviour there was such as made me less reserved, and assuming the air of a man who was well acquainted with my former indiscretions, but who entirely confided in my integrity, he conversed with me as a father would speak to his child; and by conciliating my esteem, made it impossible for me ever to deceive him. No, my Lord, he is not mistaken in me; I shall never forget that it is incumbent on me to justify his and your good opinion. But why should my heart reject his favours? Why should the man whom I am bound to love be the husband of Eloisa?

That day seemed destined to put me to every kind of proof which I could possibly undergo. After we had joined Mrs. Wolmar, her husband was called away to give some necessary orders, and I was left alone with her.

I then found myself involved in fresh perplexity, more painful and more unexpected than any which I had yet experienced. What should I say to her? How could I address her? Should I presume to remind her of our former connections, and of those times which were so recent in my memory? Should I suffer her to conclude that I had forgot them, or that I no longer regarded them? Think what a punishment it must be to treat the object nearest your heart as a stranger? What infamy, on the other hand, to abuse hospitality so far as to entertain her with discourse to which she could not now listen with decency? Under these various perplexities I could not keep my countenance; my colour

went and came; I durst not speak, nor lift up mine eyes, nor make the least motion; and I believe that I should have remained in this uneasy situation till her husband's return, if she had not relieved me. For her part, this *tête-à-tête* did not seem to embarrass her in the least. She preserved the same manner and deportment as before, and continued to talk to me with the same freedom; she only, as I imagined, endeavoured to affect more ease and gaiety, tempered with a look, not timid or tender, but soft and affectionate, as if she meant to encourage me to recover my spirits, and lay aside a reserve which she could not but perceive.

She talked to me of my long voyages; she inquired into particulars; into those especially which related to the dangers I had escaped, and the hardships I had endured: for she was sensible, she said, that she was bound in friendship to make me some reparation. "Ah, Eloisa! (said I, in a plaintive accent) I have enjoyed your company but for a moment; would you send me back to the Indies already?"—"No (she answered with a smile) but I would go thither in my turn."

I told her that I had given you a detail of my voyage, of which I had brought her a copy for her perusal. She then inquired after you with great eagerness. I gave her an account of you which I could not do without recounting the troubles I had undergone, and the uneasiness I had occasioned you. She was affected; she began to enter into her own justification in a more serious tone, and to convince me that it was her duty to act as she had done. M. Wolmar joined us in the middle of her discourse, and what confounded me was, that she proceeded in the same manner as if he had not been there. He could not forbear smiling, on discovering my astonishment. After she concluded, "You see (said he) an instance of the sincerity which reigns in this house. If you

mean to be virtuous, learn to copy it: it is the only request I have to make, and the only lesson I would teach you. The first step towards vice is to make a mystery of actions innocent in themselves, and whoever is fond of disguise, will sooner or later have reason to conceal himself.—One moral precept may supply the place of all the rest, which is this: neither to say or do any thing which you would not have all the world see and hear.—For my part, I have always esteemed that Roman above all other men, who wished that his house was built in such a manner, that the world might see all his transactions.

"I have two proposals (he continued) to make to you. Choose freely that which you like best, but accept either the one or the other." Then taking his wife's hand and mine, and closing them together, he said, "Our friendship commences from this moment; this forms the dear connection, and may it be indissoluble. Embrace her as your sister and your friend; treat her as such constantly; the more familiar you are with her, the better I shall esteem you: but either behave, when alone, as if I was present; or in my presence as if I was absent. This is all I desire. If you prefer the latter, you may choose it without any inconvenience; for as I reserve to myself the right of intimating to you any thing which displeases me, so long as I am silent in that respect you may be certain that I am not offended."

I should have been greatly embarrassed by this discourse two hours before, but M. Wolmar began to gain such an ascendancy over me, that his authority already grew somewhat familiar to me.—We all three entered once more into indifferent conversation, and every time I spoke to Eloisa, I did not fail to address her by the style of *Madam*. "Tell me sincerely, (said her husband, at last, interrupting me,) in your *tête-à-tête* party just now, did you call her *Ma-*

dam ?"——"No!" (answered I, somewhat disconcerted). —"Such politeness, (he replied) is nothing but the mask of vice; where virtue maintains its empire, it is unnecessary; and I discard it. Call my wife *Eloisa* in my presence, or *Madam* when you are alone; it is indifferent to me." I began to know what kind of a man I had to deal with, and I resolved always to keep my mind in such a state as to bear his examination.

My body drooping with fatigue, stood in need of refreshment, and my spirits required rest; I found both one and the other at table. After so many years absence and vexation, after such tedious voyages, I said to myself, in a kind of rapture, "I am in company with Eloisa, I see her, I talk with her; I sit at a table with her; she views me without inquietude, and entertains me without apprehensions. Nothing interrupts our mutual satisfaction. Gentle and precious innocence, I never before relished thy charms, and to-day, for the first time, my existence ceases to be painful."

At night, when I retired to rest, I passed by their chamber; I saw them go in together; I proceeded to my own in a melancholy mood, and this moment was the least agreeable to me of any I that day experienced.

Such, my Lord, were the occurrences of this first interview, so passionately wished for, and so dreadfully apprehended. I have endeavoured to collect myself since I have been alone; I have compelled myself to self-examination; but as I am not yet recovered from the agitation of the preceding day, it is impossible for me to judge of the true state of my mind. All that I know for certain, is, that if the nature of my affection for her is not changed, at least the mode of it is altered, for I am always anxious to have a third person between us, and I now dread being alone with her as much as I longed for it formerly.

I intend to go to Lausanne in two or three days, for as yet I have but half seen Eloisa, not having seen her cousin; that dear and amiable friend, to whom I am so much indebted, and who will always share my friendship, my services, my gratitude, and all the affections of my soul. On my return, I will take the first opportunity to give you a further account. I have need of your advice, and shall keep a strict eye over my conduct. I know my duty and will discharge it. However agreeable it may be to fix my residence in this house, I am determined, nay I have sworn, that when I grow too fond of my abode, I will quit it immediately.

LETTER CXXVI.

MRS. WOLMAR TO MRS. ORBE.

If you had been kind enough to have staid with us as long as we desired, you would have had the pleasure of embracing your friend before your departure. He came hither the day before yesterday, and wanted to visit you to-day; but the fatigue of his journey confines him to his room, and this morning he was let blood. Besides, I was fully determined, in order to punish you, not to let him go so soon; and unless you will come hither, I assure you that it will be a long time before you shall see him. You know it would be very improper to let him see the *inseparables* asunder.

In truth, Clara, I cannot tell what idle apprehensions bewitched my mind with respect to his coming hither, and I am ashamed to have opposed it with such obstinacy. As much as I dreaded the sight of him, I should now be sorry not to have seen him, for his presence has banished those fears which yet disturbed me, and which, by fixing my attention constantly on him, might at length have given me just

cause of uneasiness. I am so far from being apprehensive of the affection I feel for him, that I believe I should mistrust myself more was he less dear to me; but I love him as tenderly as ever, though my love is of a different nature. It is by comparing my present sensations with those which his presence formerly occasioned, that I derive my security, and the difference of such opposite sentiments is perceived in proportion to their vivacity.

With regard to him, though I knew him at the first glance, he nevertheless appeared to be greatly altered; and what I should formerly have thought impossible, he seems, in many respects, to be changed for the better. On the first day, he discovered many symptoms of perplexity, and it was with great difficulty that I concealed mine from him. But it was not long before he recovered that free deportment and openness of manner which becomes his character. I had always seen him timid and bashful; the fear of offending me, and perhaps the secret shame of acting a part unbecoming a man of honour, gave him an air of meanness and servility before me, which you have more than once very justly ridiculed. Instead of the submission of a slave, at present he has the respectful behaviour of a friend, who knows how to honour the object of his esteem. He now communicates his sentiments with freedom and honesty; he is not afraid lest his severe maxims of virtue should clash with his interest; he is not apprehensive of injuring himself or affecting me, by praising what is commendable in itself, and one may perceive in all he says the confidence of an honest man, who can depend upon himself, and who derives that approbation from his own conscience, which he formerly sought for only in my looks. I find, also, that experience has cured him of that dogmatical and peremptory air which men are apt to contract in their closets; that he is less forward to judge of mankind, since he

has observed them more; that he is less ready to establish general propositions, since he has seen so many exceptions; and that, in general, the love of truth has banished the spirit of system: so that he is become less brilliant, but more rational; and one receives much more information from him, now he does not affect to be so wise.

His figure likewise is altered, but nevertheless not for the worse; his countenance is more open, his deportment more stately; he has contracted a kind of martial air in his travels, which becomes him the better, as the lively and spirited gesture he used to express when he was in earnest is now turned into a more grave and sober demeanor. He is a seaman, whose appearance is cold and phlegmatic, but whose discourse is fiery and impetuous. Though he is turned of thirty, he has the look of a young man, and joins all the spirit of youth to the dignity of manhood. His complexion is entirely altered; he is almost as black as a Negroe, and very much marked with the small-pox. My dear, I must own the truth; I am uneasy whenever I view those marks, and I catch myself looking at them very often in spite of me.

I think I can discover that if I am curious in examining him, he is not less attentive in viewing me. After so long an absence, it is natural to contemplate each other with a kind of curiosity; but if this curiosity may be thought to retain any thing of our former eagerness, yet what difference is there in the manner as well as the motive of it! If our looks do not meet so often, we nevertheless view each other with more freedom. We seem to examine each other alternately by a kind of tacit agreement. Each perceives, as it were, when it is the other's turn, and looks a different way, to give the other an opportunity. Though free from the emotions I formerly felt, yet how is it possible to behold with indifference one who inspired the tenderest passion, and who, to

this hour, is the object of the purest affection? Who knows, whether self-love does not endeavour to justify past errors? Who knows, whether, though no longer blinded by passion, we do not both flatter ourselves, by secretly approving our former choice? Be it as it may, I repeat it without a blush, that I feel a more tender affection for him, which will endure to the end of my life. I am so far from reproaching myself for harbouring these sentiments, that I think they deserve applause; I should blush not to perceive them, and consider it as a defect in my character, and the symptom of a bad disposition. With respect to him, I dare believe, that next to virtue he loves me beyond any thing in the world. I perceive that he thinks himself honoured by my esteem; I in my turn will regard his in the same light, and will merit its continuance. Yes! if you saw with what tenderness he caresses my children; if you knew what pleasure he takes in talking of you, you would find, Clara, that I am still dear to him.

What increases my confidence in the opinion we both entertain of him, is that M. Wolmar joins with us, and, since he has seen him, believes, from his own observations, all that we have reported to his advantage. He has talked of him much these two evenings past, congratulating himself on account of the measures he has taken, and rallying me for my opposition. "No, (said he, yesterday,) we will not suffer so worthy a man to mistrust himself; we will teach him to have more confidence in his own virtue, and, perhaps, we may one day or other reap the fruits of our present endeavours with more advantage than you imagine. For the present, I must tell you that I am pleased with his character, and that I esteem him particularly for one circumstance, which he little suspects, that is, the reserve with which he behaves towards me. The less friendship he expresses for me,

the more he makes me his friend; I cannot tell you how much I dreaded lest he should load me with caresses. This was the first trial I prepared for him: there is yet another by which I intend to prove him: and after that I shall cease all further examination."—"As to the circumstance you mentioned, (said I,) it only proves the frankness of his disposition; for he would never resolve to put on a pliant and submissive air before my father, though it was so much his interest, and I so often entreated him to do it. I saw with concern that his behaviour deprived him of the only resource, and yet could not dislike him for not being able to play the hypocrite on any occasion."—"The case is very different (replied my husband): there is a natural antipathy between your father and him, founded on the opposition of their sentiments. With regard to myself, who have no symptoms or prejudices, I am certain that he can have no natural aversion to me. No one can hate me; a man without passions cannot inspire any one with an aversion towards him: but I deprived him of the object of his wishes, which he will not readily forgive. He will, however, conceive the stronger affection for me, when he is perfectly convinced that the injury I have done him does not prevent me from looking upon him with an eye of kindness. If he caressed me now, he would be a hypocrite; if he never caresses me, he will be a monster."

Such, my dear Clara, is the situation we are in, and I begin to think that Heaven will bless the integrity of our hearts, and the kind intentions of my husband. But I am too kind to you in entering into all these details; you do not deserve that I should take such pleasure in conversing with you; but I am determined to tell you no more, and if you desire further information, you must come hither to receive it.

P. S.—I must acquaint you nevertheless with what has passed with respect to the subject of this letter. You know

with what indulgence M. Wolmar received the late confession which our friend's unexpected return obliged me to make. You saw with what tenderness he endeavoured to dry up my tears, and dispel my shame. Whether, as you reasonably conjectured, I told him nothing new, or whether he was really affected by a proceeding which nothing but sincere repentance could dictate, he has not only continued to live with me as before, but he even seems to have increased his attention, his confidence, and esteem, as if he meant, by his kindness, to repay the confusion which my confession cost me. My dear Clara, you know my heart; judge then what an impression such a conduct must make!

As soon as I found that he was determined to let our old friend come hither, I resolved, on my part, to take the best precautions I could contrive against myself: which was, to choose my husband himself for my confidant; to hold no particular conversations which I did not communicate to him, and to write no letter which I did not show to him. I even made it a part of my duty to write every letter as if it was not intended for his inspection, and afterwards to show it to him. You will find an article in this which was penned on this principle; if while I was writing I could not forbear thinking that he might read it, yet my conscience bears witness that I did not alter a single word on that account; but when I shewed him my letter, he bantered me, and had not the civility to read it.

I confess that I was somewhat piqued at his refusal; as if he had doubted my honour. My emotion did not escape his notice, and this most open and generous man soon removed my apprehension. "Confess (said he) that you have said less concerning me than usual in that letter." I owned; was it decent to say much of him, when I intended to show him

what I had written?—"Well, (he replied, with a smile,) I had rather that you would talk of me more, and not know what you say of me." Afterwards, he continued, in a more serious tone: "Marriage (said he) is too grave and solemn a state to admit of that free communication which tender friendship allows. The latter connection often happily contributes to moderate the rigour of the former; and it may be reasonable in some cases for a virtuous and discreet woman to seek for that comfort, intelligence, and advice from a faithful confidant, which it might not be proper for her to desire of her husband. Though nothing passes between you but what you would choose to communicate, yet take care not to make it a duty, lest that duty should become a restraint upon you, and your correspondence grow less agreeable, by being more diffusive. Believe me, the open-hearted sincerity of friendship is restrained by the presence of a witness, whoever it be. There are a thousand secrets of which three friends ought to participate; but which cannot be communicated but between two. You may impart the same things to your friend and to your husband, but you do not relate them in the same manner; and if you will confound these distinctions, the consequence will be, that your letters will be addressed more to me than her, and that you will not be free from restraint either with one or the other. It is as much for my own interest as for your's that I urge these reasons. Do not you perceive that you are already, with good reason, apprehensive of the indelicacy of praising me to my face? Why will you deprive yourself of the pleasure of acquainting your friend how tenderly you love your husband, and me of the satisfaction of supposing, that, in your most private intercourses, you take delight in speaking well of me! Eloisa! Eloisa! (he added, pressing my hand, and looking at me

with tenderness,) why will you demean yourself, by taking precautions so unworthy of you, and will you never learn to make a true estimate of your own worth?"

My dear friend, it is impossible to tell you how this incomparable man behaves to me: I no longer blush in his presence. Spite of my frailty, he lifts me above myself, and, by dint of reposing confidence in me, teaches me to deserve it.

LETTER CXXVII.

THE ANSWER.

Impossible! our traveller returned, and have I not yet seen him at my feet, loaded with the spoils of America? But it is not him, I assure you, whom I accuse of this delay; for I am sensible it is as grievous to him as to me: but I find that he has not so thoroughly forgotten his former state of servility as you pretend, and I complain less of his neglect, than of your tyranny. It is very extraordinary in you, indeed, to desire such a prude as I am to make the first advances, and run to salute a swarthy pock-fretten face, which has passed four times under the line. But you make me smile to see you in such haste to scold, for fear I should begin first. I should be glad to know what pretence you have to make such an attempt? Quarrelling is my talent: I take pleasure in it; I acquit myself to a miracle, and it becomes me; but you, my dear cousin, are a mere novice at this work. If you did but know how graceful you appear in the act of confession, how lovely you look with a supplicating eye, and an air of confusion, instead of scolding, you would spend your days in asking pardon, were it only out of coquetry.

For the present, you must ask my pardon in every respect.

A fine project truly, to choose a husband for a confidant, and a more obliging precaution indeed for a friendship so sacred as our's! Thou faithless friend, and pusillanimous woman! on whom can you depend, if you mistrust yourself and me? Can you, without offence to both, considering the sacred tie under which you live, suspect your own inclinations and my indulgence. I am amazed that the very idea of admitting a third person into the tittle-tattle secrets of two women did not disgust you? As for my part, I love to prattle with you at my ease, but if I thought that the eye of man ever pryed into my letters, I should no longer have any pleasure in corresponding with you; such reserve would insensibly introduce a coldness between us, and we should have no more regard for each other than two indifferent women. To what inconveniences your silly distrust would have exposed us, if your husband had not been wiser than you.

He acted very discreetly in not reading your letter. Perhaps he would have been less satisfied with it than you imagine, and less than I am myself, who am better capable of judging of your present condition, by the state in which I have seen you formerly. All these contemplative sages, who have passed their lives in the study of the human heart, are less acquainted with the real symptoms of love than the most shallow woman, if she has any sensibility. M. Wolmar would immediately have observed, that our friend was the subject of your whole letter, and he would not have seen the postscript, in which you do not once mention him. If you had written this postscript ten years ago, my dear, I cannot tell how you would have managed; but your friend would certainly have been crowded into some corner, especially as there was no husband to overlook it.

M. Wolmar would have observed further with what attention you examined his guest, and the pleasure you take in des-

cribing his person; but he might devour Plato and Aristotle, before he would know that we *look at* a lover, but do not *examine* him. All examination requires a degree of indifference, which we never feel when we behold the object of our passion.

In short, he would imagine that all the alterations you remark might have escaped another, and I, on the contrary, was afraid of finding that they had escaped you. However your guest may be altered from what he was, he would appear the same, if your affections were not altered. You turn away your eyes whenever he looks at you; this is a very good symptom. You *turn them away*, cousin? You do not now *cast them down?* Surely you have not mistaken one word for another. Do you think that our philosopher would have perceived this distinction?

There is another circumstance very likely to disturb a husband; it is a kind of tenderness and affection which still remains in your style, when you speak of the object who was once so dear to you. One who reads your letters, or hears you speak, ought to be well acquainted with you, not to be mistaken with regard to your sentiments; he ought to know that it is only a friend of whom you are speaking, or that you speak in the same manner of all your friends; but as to that, it is the natural effect of your disposition, with which your husband is too well acquainted to be alarmed. How is it possible but that, in a mind of such tenderness, pure friendship will bear some resemblance to love? Pray observe, my dear cousin, that all I say to you on this head ought to inspire you with fresh courage: your conduct is discreet, and that is a great deal; I used to trust only to your virtue, but I begin now to rely on your reason; I consider your cure at present, though not perfect, yet as easy to be

accomplished, and you have now made a sufficient progress, to render you inexcuseable, if you do not complete it.

Before I came to your postscript, I remarked the passage which you had the sincerity not to suppress or alter, though conscious that it would be open to your husband's inspection. I am certain, that if he had read it, it would, if possible, have doubled his esteem for you; nevertheless it would have given him no great pleasure. Upon the whole, your letter was very well calculated to make him place an entire confidence in your conduct, but at the same time it tended to give him uneasiness with respect to your inclinations. I own, those marks of the small-pox, which you view so much, give me some apprehensions; love never yet contrived a more dangerous disguise.—I know that this would be of no consequence to any other; but always remember, Eloisa, that she who was not to be seduced by the youth and fine figure of her lover, was lost when she reflected on the sufferings he had endured for her.—Providence, no doubt, intended that he should retain the marks of that distemper, to exercise your virtue, and that you should be freed from them, in order to put his to the proof.

I come now to the principal subject of your letter; you know that on the receipt of our friend's I flew to you immediately; it was a matter of importance. But at present, if you knew in what difficulties that short absence has involved me, and how many things I have to do at once, you would be sensible how impossible it is for me to leave my house again, without exposing myself to fresh inconveniences, and putting myself under a necessity of passing the winter here again, which is neither for your interest or mine. Is it not better to deprive ourselves of the pleasures of a hasty interview of two or three days, that we may be together for six months?

I imagine, likewise, that it would not be improper for me to have a little particular and private conversation with our philosopher; partly to sound his inclinations and confirm his mind; partly to give him some useful advice with regard to the conduct he should observe towards your husband, and even towards you; for I do not suppose that you can talk to him with freedom on that subject, and I can perceive even from your letter, that he has need of counsel. We have been so long used to govern him, that we are in conscience responsible for his behaviour; and till he has regained the free use of his reason, we must supply the deficiency. For my own part, it is a charge I shall always undertake with pleasure; for he has paid such deference to my advice as I shall never forget; and since my husband is no more, there is not a man in the world whom I esteem and love so much as himself. I have likewise reserved for him the pleasure of doing me some little services here. I have a great many papers in confusion, which he will help me to regulate, and I have some troublesome affairs in hand, in which I shall have occasion for his diligence and understanding. As to the rest, I do not propose to detain him above five or six days at most, and perhaps I may send him to you the next day. For I have too much vanity to wait till he is seized with impatience to return, and I have too much discernment to be deceived in that case.

Do not fail, therefore, as soon as he is recovered, to send him to me; that is, to let him come, or I shall give over all raillery. You know very well, that if I laugh whilst I cry, and yet am not the less in affliction, so I laugh likewise at the same time that I scold, and yet am not the less in a passion. If you are discreet, and do things with a good grace, I promise you that I will send him back to you with a pretty little present, which will give you pleasure, and a great deal of

pleasure; but if you suffer me to languish with impatience, I assure you that you shall have nothing.

P. S.—Apropos; tell me, Does our seaman smoke? Does he swear? Does he drink brandy? Does he wear a great cutlass? Has he the look of a Buccaneer? Oh! how I long to see what sort of an air a man has who comes from the Antipodes!

LETTER CXXVIII.

CLARA TO ELOISA.

Here! take back your slave, my dear cousin.—He has been mine for these eight days past, and he bears his chains with so good a grace, that he seems formed for captivity. Return me thanks that I did not keep him still eight days longer; for, without offence to you, if I had kept till he began to grow tired of me, I should not have sent him back so soon. I therefore detained him without any scruple; but I was so scrupulous, however, that I durst not let him lodge in my house. I have sometimes perceived in myself that haughtiness of soul, which disdains servile ceremonies, and which is so consistent with virtue. In this instance, however, I have been more reserved than usual, without knowing why: and all that I know for certain is, that I am more disposed to censure than to applaud my reserve.

But can you guess what induced our friend to stay here so patiently? First, he had the pleasure of my company, and I presume that circumstance alone was sufficient to make him patient. Then he saved me a great deal of confusion, and was of service to me in my business: a friend is never tired

of such offices. A third reason, which you have probably conjectured, though you pretend not to know it, is, that he talked to me about you; and if we subtract the time employed in this conversation from the whole time which he has passed here, you will find that there is very little remaining to be placed to my account. But what an odd whim to leave you, in order to have the pleasure of talking of you! Not so odd as may be imagined. He is under constraint in your company; he must be continually upon his guard; the least indiscretion would become a crime, and in those dangerous moments, minds endued with sentiments of honour never fail to recollect their duty; but when we are remote from the object of our affections, we may indulge ourselves with feasting our imaginations. If we stifle an idea when it becomes criminal, why should we reproach ourselves for having entertained it when it was not so?——Can the pleasing recollection of innocent pleasures ever be a crime? This, I imagine, is a way of reasoning, which you will not acquiesce in, but which, nevertheless, may be admitted. He began, as I may say, to run over the whole course of his former affections. The days of his youth passed over a second time in our conversation. He renewed all his confidence in me; he recalled the happy time, in which he was permitted to love you; he painted to my imagination all the charms of an innocent passion——Without doubt he embellished them!

He said little of his present condition with regard to you, and what he mentioned rather denoted respect and admiration, than love; so that I have the pleasure to think that he will return, much more confident as to the nature of his affections than when he came hither. Not but that, when you are the subject, one may perceive at the bottom of that susceptible mind a certain tenderness, which friendship alone,

though not less affecting, still expresses in a different manner; but I have long observed, that it is impossible to see you, or to think of you, with indifference; and if to that general affection which the sight of you inspires, we add the more tender impression which an indelible recollection must have left upon his mind, we shall find that it is difficult, and almost impossible, that, with the most rigid virtue, he should be otherwise than he is. I have fully interrogated him, carefully observed him, and watched him narrowly; I have examined him with the utmost attention. I cannot read his inmost thoughts, nor do I believe them more intelligible to himself: but I can answer, at least, that he is struck with a sense of his duty and of yours, and that the idea of Eloisa abandoned and contemptible, would be more horrid than his own annihilation. My dear cousin, I have but one piece of advice to give you, and I desire you to attend to it—avoid any detail concerning what is past, and I will take upon me to answer for the future.

With regard to the restitution which you mentioned, you must think no more of it. After having exhausted all the reasons I could suggest, I entreated him, pressed him, conjured him, but in vain. I pouted, I even kissed him, I took hold of both his hands, and would have fallen on my knees to him, if he would have suffered me, but he would not so much as hear me. He carried the obstinacy of his humour so far, as to swear that he would sooner consent never to see you again, than part with your picture. At last, in a fit of passion, he made me feel it. It was next his heart. "There, (said he, with a sigh that almost stopped his breath,) there is the picture, the only comfort I have left, and of which nevertheless you would deprive me: be assured, that it shall never be torn from me but at the expence of my life." Believe me, Eloisa, we had better be discreet, and suffer him to

keep the picture. After all, where is the importance? His obstinacy will be his punishment.

After he had thoroughly unburthened and eased his mind, he appeared so composed, that I ventured to talk to him about his situation. I found that neither time nor reason had made any alteration in his system, and that he confined his whole ambition to the passing his life in the service of Lord B——. I could not but approve such honourable intentions, so consistent with his character, and so becoming that gratitude which is due to such unexhausted kindness. He told me that you were of the same opinion; but that M. Wolmar was silent. A sudden thought strikes me. From your husband's singular conduct, and other symptoms, I suspect that he has some secret design upon our friend, which he does not disclose. Let us leave him to himself, and trust to his discretion. The manner in which he behaves sufficiently proves, that, if my conjecture is right, he meditates nothing but what will be for the advantage of the person about whom he has taken such uncommon pains.

You gave a very just description of his figure and of his manners, which proves that you have observed him more attentively than I should have imagined. But do not you find that his continued anxieties have rendered his countenance more expressive than it used to be? Notwithstanding the account you gave me, I was afraid to find him tinctured with that affected politeness, those apish manners, which people seldom fail to contract at Paris, and which, in the round of trifles which employ an indolent day, are vainly displayed under different modes. Whether it be that some minds are not susceptible of this polish, or whether the sea air entirely effaced it, I could not discover in him the least marks of affectation; and all the zeal he expressed for me seemed to flow entirely from the dictates of his heart. He talked to

me about my poor husband; but instead of comforting me, he chose to join with me in bewailing him, and never once attempted to make any fine speeches on the subject. He caressed my daughter, but instead of admiring her as I do, he reproached me with her failings, and, like you, complained that I spoiled her; he entered into my concerns with great zeal, and was seldom of my opinion in any respect. Moreover, the wind might have blown my eyes out, before he would have thought of drawing a curtain; I might have been fatigued to death in going from one room to another, before he would have had gallantry enough to have stretched out his hand, covered with the skirt of his coat, to support me: my fan lay upon the ground yesterday for more than a second, and he did not fly from the bottom of the room, as if he was going to snatch it out of the fire. In the morning, before he came to visit me, he never once sent to inquire how I did. When we are walking together, he does not affect to have his hat nailed upon his head, to show that he knows the pink of the mode*. At table, I frequently asked him for his snuff-box, which he always gave me in his hand, and never presented it upon a plate, like a *fine gentleman*; or rather like a footman. He did not fail to drink my health twice at least at dinner, and I will lay a wager, that if he stays with us this winter, we shall see him sit round the fire with us, and warm himself like an old cit. You laugh, cousin; but show

* At Paris, they pique themselves on rendering society easy and commodious; and this ease is made to consist of a great number of rules, equally important with the above. In good company, every thing is regulated according to form and order. All these ceremonies are in and out of fashion as quick as lightning. The science of polite life consists in being always upon the watch, to seize them as they fly, to affect them, and show that we are acquainted with the mode of the day.

me one of our gallants newly arrived from Paris, who preserves the same manly deportment.——As to the rest, I think you must allow that our philosopher is altered for the worse in one respect, which is, that he takes rather more notice of people who speak to him, which he cannot do but to your prejudice; nevertheless, I hope that I shall be able to reconcile him to Madam Belon. For my part, I think him altered for the better, because he is more serious than ever. My dear, take great care of him till my arrival. He is just the man I could wish to have the pleasure of plaguing all day long.

Admire my discretion; I have taken no notice yet of the present I sent you, and which is an earnest of another to come. But you have received it before you opened my letter and you know how much, and with what reason I idolize it; you, whose avarice is so anxious about this present, you must acknowledge that I have performed more than I promised. Ah! the dear little creature! While you are reading this, she is already in your arms; she is happier than her mother; but in two months time I shall be happier than she, for I shall be more sensible of my felicity. Alas! dear cousin, do not you possess me wholly already? Where you and my daughter are, what part of me is wanting? There she is, the dear little infant; take her as your own; I give her up; I put her into your hands; I consign all maternal authority over to you; correct my failings; take that charge upon yourself, of which I acquitted myself so little to your liking: henceforward, be as a mother to her, who is one day to be your daughter-in-law; and to render her dearer to me still, make another Eloisa of her if possible. She is like you in the face already; as to her temper, I guess that she will be grave and thoughtful; when you have corrected those little caprices which I have been accused of encouraging,

you will find that my daughter will give herself the airs of my cousin; but she will be happier than Eloisa in having less tears to shed, and less struggles to encounter. Do you know that she cannot be any longer without her little M——, and that it is partly for that reason I send her back? I had a conversation with her yesterday, which threw our friend into an immoderate fit of laughing. First, she leaves me without the least regret; I, who am her humble servant all day long, and can deny her nothing she asks for; and you, of whom she is afraid, and who answer her *No* twenty times a day; you, by way of excellence, are her little mamma, whom she visits with pleasure, and whose denials she likes better than all my fine presents: when I told her that I was going to send her to you, she was transported as you may imagine; but to perplex her, I told her that you in return was to send me little M—— in her stead, and that was not agreeable to her. She was quite at a nonplus, and asked what I would do with him? I told her that I would take him to myself: she began to pout. "Harriet, (said I,) won't you give up your little M—— to me?"——"No," (said she, somewhat coldly.) "No? But if I won't give him up neither, who shall settle it between us?"—"Mamma, my little mamma shall settle it."—"Then I shall have the preference, for you know she will do whatever I desire."—"Oh, but mamma will do nothing but what is right!"—"And do you think I should desire what's wrong?" The sly little jade began to smile. "But after all, (I continued,) for what reason should she refuse to give me little M—— ?"—"Because he is not fit for you."—"And why is he not fit for me? (Another arch smile, as full of meaning as the former.) Tell me honestly, is it not because you think me too old for him?"—"No, mamma, but he is too young for you."..... This from a child but seven years old.....

I amused myself with piquing her still further. "My dear Harriet, (said I, assuming a serious air,) I assure you that he is not fit for you neither." "Why so?" (she cried, as if she had been suddenly alarmed.)—"Because he is too giddy for you."—"Oh, mamma, is that all? I will make him wise."—"But if unfortunately he should make you foolish."—"Then, mamma, I should be like you."—"Like me, impertinence?"—"Yes, mamma, you are saying all day that you are foolishly fond of me."—"Well, then, I will be foolishly fond of him, that is all."

I know you don't approve of this pretty prattle, and that you will soon know how to check it. Neither will I justify it, though I own it delights me; but I only mention it, to convince you that my daughter is already in love with her little M——, and that if he is two years younger, she is not unworthy of that authority which she may claim by right of seniority. I perceive likewise, by opposing your example and my own to that of your poor mother's, that where the woman governs, the house is not the worse managed. Farewell, my dear friend; farewell, my constant companion! The time is approaching, and the vintage shall not be gathered without me.

LETTER CXXIX.

TO LORD B——.

WHAT pleasures, too late enjoyed (alas! enjoyed too late), have I tasted these three weeks past! How delightful to pass one day in the bosom of calm friendship, secure from the tempests of impetuous passion! What a pleasing and affecting scene, my Lord, is a plain and well-reguated family, where

order, peace, and innocence reign throughout; where, without pomp or retinue, every thing is assembled which can contribute to the real felicity of mankind! The country, the retirement, the season, the vast body of water which opens to my view, the wild prospect of the mountains, every thing conspires to recall to my mind the delightful island of Tinian. I flatter myself that the earnest prayers which I there so often repeated, are now accomplished. I live here agreeably to my taste, and enjoy society suitable to my liking. I only want the company of two persons to complete my happiness, and I hope to see them here soon.

In the mean time, till you and Mrs. Orbe come to perfect those charming and innocent pleasures which I begin to relish here, I will endeavour, by way of detail, to give you an idea of that domestic economy which proclaims the happiness of the master and mistress, and communicates their felicity to every one under their roof. I hope that my reflections may one day be of use to you, with respect to the project you have in view, and this hope encourages me to pursue them.

I need not give you a description of Clarens house. You know it. You can tell how delightful it is; what interesting recollections it presents to my mind; you can judge how dear it must be to me, both on account of the present scenes it exhibits, and of those which it recalls to my mind. Mrs. Wolmar, with good reason, prefers this abode to that of Etange, a superb and magnificent castle, but old, inconvenient, and gloomy, its situation being far inferior to the country round Clarens.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar have fixed their residence here, they have converted to use every thing which served only for ornament: it is no longer a house for show, but for convenience. They have shut up a long range of rooms, to

alter the inconvenient situation of the doors; they have cut off others that were over-sized, that the apartments might be better distributed. Instead of rich and antique furniture, they have substituted what is neat and convenient. Every thing here is pleasant and agreeable; every thing breathes an air of plenty and propriety, without any appearance of pomp and luxury. There is not a single room, in which you do not immediately recollect that you are in the country, but in which, nevertheless, you will find all the conveniences you meet with in town. The same alterations are observable without doors. The yard has been enlarged at the expence of the coach-houses. Instead of an old tattered billiard-table, they have made a fine press, and the spot which used to be filled with screaming peacocks, which they have parted with, is converted into a dairy. The kitchen-garden was too small for the kitchen; they have made another out of a flower-garden, but so convenient, and so well laid out, that the spot, thus transformed, looks more agreeable to the eye than before. Instead of the mournful yews which covered the wall, they have planted good fruit-trees. In the room of the useless Indian *black-berry*, fine young mulberry-trees now begin to shade the yard, and they have planted two rows of walnut-trees quite to the road, in the place of some old linden-trees which bordered the avenue. They have throughout substituted the useful in the room of the agreeable, and yet the agreeable has gained by the alteration. For my own part, at least, I think that the noises in the yard, such as the crowing of the cocks, the lowing of the cattle, the harness of the carts, the rural repasts, the return of the husbandmen, and all the train of rustic economy, give the house a more lively, animated, and gay appearance, than it had in its former state of mournful dignity.

Their estate is not out upon lease, but they are their own

farmers, and the cultivation of it employs a great deal of their time, and makes a great part both of their pleasure and profit. The manor of Etange is nothing but meadow, pasture, and wood: but the produce of Clarens consists of vineyards, which are considerable objects, and in which the difference of culture produces more sensible effects than in corn; which is a further reason why, in point of economy, they should prefer the latter as a place of residence. Nevertheless, they generally go to Etange every year at harvest-time, and M. Wolmar visits it frequently. It is a maxim with them, to cultivate their lands to the utmost they will produce, not for the sake of extraordinary profit, but as the means of employing more hands. M. Wolmar maintains, that the produce of the earth is in proportion to the number of hands employed; the better it is tilled, the more it yields; and the surplus of its produce furnishes the means of cultivating it still further; the more it is stocked with men and cattle, the greater abundance it yields for their support.—No one can tell, (says he,) where this continual and reciprocal increase of produce and of labour may end. On the contrary, land neglected loses its fertility; the fewer men a country produces, the less provision it furnishes; the scarcity of inhabitants is the reason why it is insufficient to maintain the few it has, and in every country which tends to depopulation, the people will sooner or later die of famine.

Therefore, having a great deal of land, which they cultivate with the utmost industry, they require, besides the servants in the yard, a great number of day-labourers, which procures them the pleasure of maintaining a great number of people without any inconvenience to themselves. In the choice of their labourers, they always prefer their neighbours, and those of the same place, to strangers and foreigners. Though by this means they may sometimes be losers in

not choosing the most robust, yet this loss is soon made up by the affection which this preference inspires in those whom they choose, by the advantage likewise of having them always about them, and of being able to depend on them at all times, though they keep them in pay but part of the year.

They always make two prices with these labourers. One is a strict payment of right, the current price of the country, which they engage to pay them when they hire them: the other, which is more liberal, is a payment of generosity; it is bestowed only as they are found to deserve it, and it seldom happens that they do not earn the surplus: for M. Wolmar is just and strict, and never suffers institutions of grace and favour to degenerate into custom and abuse. Over these labourers there are overseers, who watch and encourage them. These overseers work along with the rest; and are interested in their labour, by a little augmentation which is made to their wages from every advantage that is reaped from their industry. Besides, M. Wolmar visits them almost every day himself, sometimes often in a day, and his wife loves to take these walks with him. In times of extraordinary business, Eloisa every week bestows some little gratifications to such of the labourers, or other servants, as, in the judgment of their master, have been most industrious for the past week. All these means of promoting emulation, though seemingly expensive, when used with justice and discretion, insensibly make people laborious and diligent; and in the end bring in more than is disbursed; but, as they turn to no profit, but by time and perseverance, few people know any thing of them, or are willing to make use of them.

But the most effectual method of all, which is peculiar to Mrs. Wolmar, and which they who are bent on economy

seldom think of, is that of gaining the hearts of those good people, by making them the objects of her affection. She does not think it sufficient to reward their industry, by giving them money, but she thinks herself bound to do further services to those who have contributed to hers. Labourers, domestics, all who serve her, if it be but for a day, become her children: she takes part in their pleasures, their cares, and their fortune; she inquires into their affairs; and makes their interest her own; she engages in a thousand concerns for them, she gives them her advice, she composes their differences, and does not show the affability of her disposition in smooth and fruitless speeches, but in real services, and continual acts of benevolence. They, on their parts, leave every thing, to serve her, on the least motion. They fly when she speaks to them; her look alone animates their zeal; in her presence they are contented; in her absence they talk of her, and are eager to be employed. Her charms, and her manner of conversing, do a great deal, but her gentleness and her virtues more. Ah! my Lord, what a powerful and adorable empire is that of benevolent beauty!

With respect to their personal attendants, they have within doors eight servants, three women and five men, without reckoning the Baron's valet-de-chambre, or the servants in the out-houses.—It seldom happens that people who have but few servants, are ill served; but from the uncommon zeal of these servants, one would conclude that each thought himself charged with the business of the other seven, and from the harmony among them, one would imagine that the whole business was done by one man. You never see them in the out-houses idle, and unemployed, or playing in the court-yard, but always about some useful employment; they assist in the yard, in the cellar, and in the kitchen. The gar-

dener has nobody under him but them, and, what is most agreeable, you see them do all this cheerfully, and with pleasure.

They take them young, in order to form them to their minds. They do not follow the maxim here, which prevails at Paris and London, of choosing domestics ready formed; that is to say, complete rascals, runners of quality, who, in every family they go through, catch the failings both of master and man, and make a trade of serving every body, without being attached to any one. There can be neither honesty, fidelity, or zeal, among such fellows, and this collection of rabble serves to ruin the masters, and corrupt the children, in all wealthy families. Here, the choice of domestics is considered as an article of importance. They do not regard them merely as mercenaries, from whom they only require a stipulated service, but as members of a family, which, should they be ill chosen, might be ruined by that means. The first thing they require of them is to be honest, the next is to love their master, and the third to serve him to his liking: but where a master is reasonable, and a servant intelligent, the third is the consequence of the two first. Therefore they do not take them from town, but from the country. This is the first place they live in, and it will assuredly be the last if they are good for any thing. They take them out of some numerous family overstocked with children, whose parents come to offer them of their own accord. They choose them young, well-made, healthy, and of a pleasant countenance. M. Wolmar interrogates and examines them, and then presents them to his wife. If they prove agreeable to both, they are received at first upon trial; afterwards they are admitted among the number of servants, or, more properly, the children of the family; and they employ some days in teaching them their duty with a great deal of care and patience. The

service is so simple, so equal and uniform, the master and mistress are so little subject to whims and caprice, and the servants so soon conceive an affection for them, that their business is soon learnt. Their condition is agreeable; they find conveniences which they had not at home; but they are not suffered to be enervated by idleness, the parent of vice. They do not allow them to become gentlemen, and to grow proud in their service. They continue to work as they did with their own family; in fact, they do but change their father and mother, and get more wealthy parents. They do not, therefore, hold their old rustic employments in contempt. Whenever they leave this place, there is not one of them who had not rather turn peasant, than take any other employment. In short, I never saw a family, where every one acquits himself so well in his service, and thinks so little of the trouble of servitude.

Thus, by training up their servants themselves, in this discreet manner, they guard against the objection which is so very trifling, and so frequently made, *viz.* "I shall only bring them up for the service of others." Train them properly, one might answer, and they will never serve any one else. If, in bringing them up, you solely regard your own benefit, they have a right to consult their own interest in quitting you; but if you seem to consider their advantage, they will remain constantly attached to you. It is the intention alone which constitutes the obligation, and he who is indirectly benefited by an act of kindness, wherein I meant to serve myself only, owes me no obligation whatever.

As a double preventive against this inconvenience, Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar take another method, which appears to me extremely prudent. At the first establishment of their household, they calculated what number of servants their fortune would allow them to keep, and they found it to

amount to fifteen or sixteen: in order to be better served, they made a reduction of half that number; so that, with less retinue, their service is more exactly attended. To be more effectually served still, they have made it the interest of their servants to continue with them a long time. When a domestic first enters into their service, he receives the common wages; but those wages are augmented every year by a twentieth part; so that, at the end of twenty years, they will be more than doubled, and the charge of keeping these servants will be nearly the same, in proportion to the master's circumstances. But there is no need of being a deep algebraist to discover that the expence of this augmentation is more in appearance than reality; that there will be but few to whom double wages will be paid, and that if they were paid to all the servants, yet the benefit of having been well served for twenty years past, would more than compensate the extraordinary expence. You perceive, my Lord, that this is a certain expedient of making servants grow continually more and more careful, and of attaching them to you, by attaching yourself to them. There is not only prudence, but justice, in such a provision. Is it reasonable that a newcomer, who has no affection for you, and who is perhaps an unworthy object, should receive the same salary, at his first entrance into the family, as an old servant, whose zeal and fidelity have been tried in a long course of services, and who, besides, being grown in years, draws near the time when he will be incapable of providing for himself? The latter reason, however, must not be brought into the account, and you may easily imagine that such a benevolent master and mistress do not fail to discharge that duty, which many, who are devoid of charity, fulfil out of ostentation; and you may suppose that they do not abandon those whose infirmities or old age render them incapable of service.

I can give you a very striking instance of their attention to this duty. The Baron d'Etange, being desirous to recompense the long services of his valet-de-chambre, by procuring him an honourable retreat, had the interest to procure for him the L. S. E. E. an easy and lucrative post. Eloisa has just now received a most affecting letter from this old servant, in which he entreats her to get him excused from accepting this employment. "I am in years (says he): I have lost all my family; all my hope is to end my days quietly in the house where I have passed the greatest part of them. Often, dear madam, as I have held you in my arms when but an infant, I prayed to Heaven that I might one day hold your little ones in the same manner. My prayers have been heard; do not deny me the happiness of seeing them grow and prosper like you. I, who have been accustomed to a quiet family, where shall I find such another place of rest in my old age? Be so kind to write to the Baron in my behalf. If he is dissatisfied with me, let him turn me off, and give me no employment; but if I have served him faithfully for these forty years past, let him allow me to end my days in his service and yours—he cannot reward me better." It is needless to inquire whether Eloisa wrote to the Baron or not. I perceive that she would be as unwilling to part with this good man, as he would be to leave her. Am I wrong, my Lord, when I compare a master and mistress, thus beloved, to good parents, and their servants to obedient children? You find that they consider themselves in this light.

There is not a single instance in this family, of a servant's giving warning. It is even very seldom that they are threatened with a dismission. A menace of this kind alarms them in proportion as their service is pleasant and agreeable. The best subjects are always the soonest alarmed, and there is never any occasion to come to extremities but with such as

are not worth regretting.—They have likewise a rule in this respect. When M. Wolmar says, "I discharge you;" they may then implore Mrs. Wolmar to intercede for them, and through her intercession may be restored: but if *she* gives them warning, it is irrevocable, and they have no favour to expect. This agreement between them is very well calculated both to moderate the extreme confidence which her gentleness might beget in them, and the violent apprehensions they might conceive from his inflexibility. Such a warning, nevertheless, is excessively dreaded from a just and dispassionate master; for, besides that they are not certain of obtaining favour, and that the same person is never pardoned twice, they forfeit the right which they acquire from their long service, by having had warning given, and when they are restored, they begin a new service as it were. This prevents the old servants from growing insolent, and makes them more circumspect, in proportion as they have more to lose.

The three maid-servants are the chambermaid, the governess, and the cook. The latter is a country-girl, very proper and well qualified for the place, whom Mrs. Wolmar has instructed in cookery: for in this country, which is as yet in some measure in a state of simplicity, young ladies learn to do that business themselves, that when they keep house, they may be able to direct their servants; and consequently are less liable to be imposed upon by them. B—— is no longer the chamber-maid; they have sent her back to Etange, where she was born; they have again entrusted her with the care of the castle, and the superintendance of the receipts, which makes her in some degree comptroller of the household.—M. Wolmar entreated his wife to make this regulation; but it was a long time before she could resolve to part with an old servant of her mother's, though she had more than one reason to be displeased with her. But after

their last conference, she gave her consent, and B—— is gone. The girl is handy and honest, but babbling and indiscreet. I suspect that she has, more than once, betrayed the secrets of her mistress; that M. Wolmar is sensible of it; and, to prevent her being guilty of the same indiscretion with respect to a stranger, he has prudently taken this method to avail himself of her good qualities, without running any hazard from her failings. She who is taken in her room, is that Fanny of whom you have often heard me speak with so much pleasure. Notwithstanding Eloisa's prediction, her favours, her father's kindness, and yours, this deserving and discreet woman has not been happy in her connection. Claude Annet, who endured adversity so bravely, could not support a more prosperous state. When he found himself at ease, he neglected his business, and, his affairs being quite embarrassed, he fled the country, leaving his wife with an infant, whom she has since lost. Eloisa having taken her home, instructed her in the business of a chamber-maid; and I was never more agreeably surprized than to find her settled in her employment the first day of my arrival. M. Wolmar pays great regard to her, and they have both entrusted her with the charge of superintending their children, and of having an eye likewise over their governess, who is a simple credulous country-lass, but attentive, patient, and tractable: so that, in short, they have omitted no precaution to prevent the vices of the town from creeping into a family, where the master and mistress are strangers to them, and will not suffer them under their roof.

Though there is but one table among all the servants, yet there is but little communication between the men and women; and this they consider as a point of great importance. M. Wolmar is not of the same opinion with those masters who are indifferent to every thing which does not immedi-

ately concern their interests, and who only desire to be well served, without troubling themselves about what their servants do besides. He thinks, on the contrary, that they who regard nothing but their own service, cannot be well served. Too close a connection between the two sexes frequently occasions mischief. The disorders of most families arise from the rendezvous which are held in the chamber-maid's apartment. If there is one whom the steward happens to be fond of, he does not fail to seduce her at the expence of his master. A good understanding among the men or among the women is not alone sufficiently firm to produce any material consequences: but it is always between the men and the women that those secret monopolies are established, which in the end ruined the most wealthy families. They pay a particular attention, therefore, to the discretion and modesty of the women, not only from principles of honesty and morality, but from well-judged motives of interest. For, whatever some may pretend, no one who does not love his duty, can discharge it as he ought; and none ever loved their duty, who were devoid of honour.

They do not, to prevent any dangerous intimacy between the two sexes, restrain them by positive rules, which they might be tempted to violate in secret; but without any seeming intention, they establish good customs, which are more powerful than authority itself. They do not forbid any intercourse between them; but it is contrived in such a manner, that they have no occasion or inclination to see each other. This is effectuated by making their business, their habits, their tastes, and their pleasures, entirely different. To maintain the admirable order which they have established, they are sensible that in a well-regulated family there should be as little correspondence as possible between the two sexes. They who would accuse their master of caprice, was he to

enforce such a rule by way of injunction, submit, without regret, to a manner of life which is not positively prescribed to them, but which they themselves conceive to be the best and most natural. Eloisa insists that it must be so in fact; she maintains that neither love nor conjugal union is the result of a continual commerce between the sexes. In her opinion, husband and wife were designed to live together, but not to live in the same manner. They ought to act in concert, but not to do the same things. The kind of life, says she, which would delight the one would be insupportable to the other; the inclinations which nature has given them, are as different as the occupations she has assigned them; they differ in their amusements as much as in their duties: in a word, each contributes to the common good by different ways, and the proper distribution of their several cares and employments is the strongest tie that cements their union.

For my own part, I confess that my observations are much in favour of this maxim. In fact, is it not the general practice, except among the French, and those who imitate them, for the men and women to live separately? If they see each other, it is rather by short interviews, and as it were by stealth, as the Spartans visited their wives, than by an indiscreet and constant intercourse, sufficient to confound and destroy the wisest bounds of distinction which nature has set between them. We do not, even among the savages, see men and women intermingle indiscriminately. In the evening, the family meet together; every one passes the night with his wife; when the day begins, they separate again, and the two sexes enjoy nothing in common, but their meals at most. This is the order which, from its universality, appears to be most natural, and even in those countries where it is perverted, we may perceive some vestiges of it remaining. In France, where the men have submitted to live after the

fashion of the women, and to be continually shut up in a room with them, you may perceive, from their involuntary motions, that they are under confinement. While the ladies sit quietly, or loll upon their couch, you may perceive the men get up, go, come, and sit down again, perpetually restless, as if a kind of mechanical instinct continually counteracted the restraint they suffered, and prompted them, in their own despite, to that active and laborious life for which nature intended them. They are the only people in the world where the men *stand* at the theatre, as if they went into the pit to relieve themselves of the fatigue of having been sitting all day in a dining-room. In short, they are so sensible of the irksomeness of this effeminate and sedentary indolence, that in order to chequer it with some degree of activity at least, they yield their places at home to strangers, and go to other men's wives, in order to alleviate their disgust!

The example of Mrs. Wolmar's family contributes greatly to support the maxim she establishes.—Every one, as it were, being confined to their proper sex, the women there live in a great measure apart from the men. In order to prevent any suspicious connections between them, her great secret is to keep both one and the other constantly employed, for their occupations are so different, that nothing but idleness can bring them together. In the morning each apply to their proper business, and no one is at leisure to interrupt the other. After dinner, the men are employed in the garden, the yard, or in some rural occupation; the women are busy in the nursery till the hour comes at which they take a walk with the children, and sometimes indeed with the mistress, which is very agreeable to them, as it is the only time in which they take the air. The men, being sufficiently tired with their day's work, have seldom any inclination to walk, and therefore rest themselves within doors.

Every Sunday, after evening-service, the women meet again in the nursery, with some friend or relation, whom they invite in their turns by Mrs. Wolmar's consent. There they have a little collation prepared for them by Eloisa's direction; and she permits them to chat, sing, run, or play at some little game of skill, fit to please children, and such as they may bear a part in themselves. The entertainment is composed of syllabubs, cream, and different kinds of cakes, with such other little viands as suit the taste of women and children. Wine is almost excluded; and the men, who are rarely admitted of this little female party, never are present at this collation, which Eloisa seldom misses. I am the only man who has obtained this privilege. Last Sunday, with great importunity, I got leave to attend her there. She took great pains to make me consider it as a very singular favour. She told me aloud, that she granted it for that once only, and that she had even refused M. Wolmar himself. You may imagine whether this difficulty of admission does not flatter female vanity a little, and whether a footman would be a welcome visitor where his master is excluded.

I made a most delicious repast with them.—Where will you find such cream-cakes as we have here? Imagine what they must be, made in a dairy where Eloisa presides, and eaten in her company. Fanny presented me with some cream, some seed-cake, and other little comfits. All was gone in an instant. Eloisa smiled at my appetite. "I find (said she, giving me another plate of cream,) that your appetite does you credit every where, and that you make as good a figure among a club of females, as you do among the Valaisans."—"But I do not (answered I) make the repast with more impunity; the one may be attended with intoxication as well as the other; and reason may be as much distracted in a nursery as in a wine-cellar." She cast her eyes

down without making any reply, blushed, and began to play with her children. This was enough to sting me with remorse. This, my Lord, was the first indiscretion, and I hope it will be the last.

There was a certain air of primitive simplicity in this assembly, which affected me very sensibly. I perceived the same cheerfulness in every countenance, and perhaps more openness than if there had been men in company. The familiarity which was observable between the mistress and her servants, being founded on sincere attachment and confidence, only served to establish respect and authority; and the services rendered and received, appeared like so many testimonies of reciprocal friendship. There was nothing, even to the very choice of the collation, but what contributed to make this assembly engaging. Milk and sugar are naturally adapted to the taste of the fair-sex, and may be deemed the symbols of innocence and sweetness, which are their most becoming ornaments. Men, on the contrary, are fond of high flavours, and strong liquors; a kind of nourishment more suitable to the active and laborious life for which nature has designed them: and when these different tastes come to be blended, it is an infallible sign that the distinction between the two sexes is inordinately confounded. In fact, I have observed that, in France, where the women constantly intermix with the men, they have entirely lost their relish for milk-meats, and the men have in some measure lost their taste for wine; and in England, where the two sexes are better distinguished, the proper taste of each is better preserved. In general, I am of opinion that you may very often form some judgment of people's disposition, from their choice of food.—The Italians, who live a great deal on vegetables, are soft and effeminate. You Englishmen, who are great eaters of meat, have something harsh in your rigid virtue, and

which savours of barbarism. The Swiss, who is naturally of a calm, gentle, and cold constitution, but hot and violent when in a passion, is fond both of one and the other, and drinks milk and wine indiscriminately. The Frenchman, who is pliant and changeable, lives upon all kinds of food, and conforms himself to every taste. Eloisa herself may serve as an instance: for though she makes her meals with a keen appetite, yet she does not love meat, ragouts, or salt, and never yet tasted wine by itself. Some excellent roots, eggs, cream, and fruit, compose her ordinary diet, and was it not for fish, of which she is likewise very fond, she would be a perfect Pythagorean.

To keep the women in order, would signify nothing, if the men were not likewise under proper regulations; and this branch of domestic economy, which is not of less importance, is still more difficult; for the attack is generally more lively than the defence: the guardian of human nature intended it so. In the common-wealth, citizens are kept in order by principles of morality and virtue: but how are we to keep servants and mercenaries under proper regulations, otherwise than by force and restraint? The art of a master consists in disguising this restraint under the veil of pleasure and interest, that what they are obliged to do, may seem the result of their own inclination. Sunday being a day of idleness, and servants having a right of going where they please, when business does not require their duty at home, that one day often destroys all the good examples and lessons of the other six. The habit of frequenting public-houses, the converse and maxims of their comrades, the company of loose women, soon render them unserviceable to their masters, and unprofitable to themselves; and by teaching them a thousand vices, make them unfit for servitude, and unworthy of liberty.

To remedy this inconvenience, they endeavour to keep them at home by the same motives which induce them to go abroad. Why do they go abroad? To drink and play at a public-house. They drink and play at home. All the difference is, that the wine costs them nothing, that they do not get drunk, and that there are some winners at play without any losers. The following is the method taken for this purpose.

Behind the house is a shady walk, where they have fixed the lists. There, in the summer-time, the livery-servants and the men in the yard meet every Sunday, after sermon-time, to play in little detached parties, not for money, for it is not allowed, nor for wine, which is given them; but for a prize, furnished by their master's generosity, which is generally some piece of goods or apparel fit for their use. The number of games is in proportion to the value of the prize; so that when the prize is somewhat considerable, as a pair of silver buckles, a neckcloth, a pair of silk stockings, a fine hat, or any thing of that kind, they have generally several bouts to decide it. They are not confined to one particular game, but they change them, that one man, who happens to excel in a particular game, may not carry off all the prizes, and that they may grow stronger and more dexterous by a variety of exercises. At one time, the contest is who shall first reach a mark at the other end of the walk; at another time it is who shall throw the same stone farthest; then again it is who shall carry the same weight longest. Sometimes they contend for a prize, by shooting at a mark. Most of these games are attended with some little preparations, which serve to prolong them, and render them entertaining. Their master and mistress often honour them with their presence; they sometimes take their children with them; nay, even strangers resort thither, excited by curiosity, and they desire

nothing better than to bear a share in the sport; but none are ever admitted without M. Wolmar's approbation, and the consent of the players, who would not find their account in granting it readily. This custom has imperceptibly become a kind of show, in which the actors, being animated by the presence of the spectators, prefer the glory of applause to the lucre of the prize.—As these exercises make them more active and vigorous, they set a greater value on themselves, and, being accustomed to estimate their importance from their own intrinsic worth, rather than from their own possessions, they prize honour, notwithstanding they are footmen, beyond money.

It would be tedious to enumerate all the advantages which they derive from a practice so trifling in appearance, and which is always despised by little minds; but it is the prerogative of true genius to produce great effects by inconsiderable means. M. Wolmar has assured me that these little institutions, which his wife first suggested, scarce stood him in fifty crowns a year. "But (said he) how often do you think I am repaid this sum in my housekeeping and my affairs in general, by the vigilance and attention with which I am served by these faithful servants, who derive all their pleasures from their master; by the interest they take in a family which they consider as their own; by the advantage I reap in their labours, from the vigour they acquire at their exercises; by the benefit of keeping them always in health, in preserving them from those excesses which are common to men in their station, and from those disorders which frequently attend such excesses; by securing them from any propensity to knavery, which is an infallible consequence of irregularity, and by confirming them in the practice of honesty; in short, by the pleasure of having such agreeable recreations within ourselves at such a trifling expence? If

there are any among them, either man or woman, who do not care to conform to our regulations, but prefer the liberty of going where they please, on various pretences, we never refuse to give them leave: but we consider this licentious turn as a very suspicious symptom, and we are always ready to mistrust such dispositions. Thus these little amusements, which furnish us with good servants, serve also as a direction to us in the choice of them."—I must confess, my Lord, that except in this family I never saw the same men made good domestics for personal service, good husbandmen for tilling the ground, good soldiers for the defence of their country, and honest fellows in any station into which fortune may chance to throw them.

In the winter, their pleasures vary, as well as their labours. On a Sunday, all the servants in the family, and even the neighbours, men and women indiscriminately, meet after service-time in a hall where there is a good fire, some wine, fruits, cakes, and a fiddle, to which they dance. Mrs. Wolmar never fails to be present, for some time at least, in order to preserve decorum and modesty by her presence; and it is not uncommon for her to dance herself, though among her own people.

When I was first made acquainted with this custom, it appeared to me not quite conformable to the strictness of Protestant morals. I told Eloisa so; and she answered me to the following effect: "Pure morality is charged with so many severe duties, that if it is overburdened with forms, which are in themselves indifferent, they will always be of prejudice to what is really essential. This is said to be the case with the monks in general, who, being slaves to rules totally immaterial, are utter strangers to the meaning of honour and virtue. This defect is less observable among us, though we are not wholly exempt from it. Our churchmen,

who are as much superior to other priests in knowledge, as our religion is superior to all others in purity, do nevertheless maintain some maxims, which seem to be rather founded on prejudice than reason. Of this kind, is that which condemns dancing and assemblies, as if there were more harm in dancing than singing, as if each of these amusements were not equally a propensity of nature, and as if it were a crime to divert ourselves publicly with an innocent and harmless recreation. For my own part, I think, on the contrary, that every time there is a concourse of the two sexes, every public diversion becomes innocent, by being public; whereas, the most laudable employment becomes suspicious in a *tête-à-tête* party*. Men and women were formed for each other; their union by marriage is the end of nature. All false religion is at war with nature; our's, which conforms to and rectifies natural propensity, proclaims a divine institution which is most suitable to mankind. Religion ought not to increase the embarrassment which civil regulations throw in the way of matrimony, by difficulties which the Gospel does not create, and which are contrary to the true spirit of Christianity. Let any one tell me where young people can have an opportunity of conceiving a mutual liking, and of seeing each other with more decorum and circumspection than in an assembly, where the eyes of the spectators being constantly upon them, oblige them to behave with peculiar caution? How can we offend God by an agreeable and wholesome exercise, suitable to the vivacity of youth; an exercise which consists in the art of presenting ourselves to each other with grace and elegance, and wherein the presence of the spectator imposes a decorum

* In my letter to M. D'Alembert, concerning the theatres, I have transcribed the following passage, and some others; but as I was then preparing this edition, I thought it better to wait this publication, till I took notice of the quotation.

which no one dares to violate? Can we conceive a more effectual method to avoid imposition with respect to person at least, by displaying ourselves with all our natural graces and defects before those whose interest it is to know us thoroughly, ere they oblige themselves to love us?—Is not the obligation of reciprocal affection greater than that of self-love, and is it not an attention worthy of a pious and virtuous pair, who propose to marry, thus to prepare their hearts for that mutual love which Heaven prompts?

"What is the consequence, in those places where people are under a continual restraint, where the most innocent gaiety is punished as criminal, where the young people of different sexes dare not meet in public, and where the indiscreet severity of the pastor preaches nothing, in the name of God, but servile constraint, sadness, and melancholy? They find means to elude an insufferable tyranny, which nature and reason disavow. When gay and sprightly youth are debarred from lawful pleasures, they substitute others more dangerous in their stead. Private parties, artfully concerted, supply the place of public assemblies. By being obliged to concealment, as if they were criminal, they at length become so in fact. Harmless joy loves to display itself in the face of the world, but vice is a friend to darkness; and innocence and secrecy never subsist long together. My dear friend, (said she, grasping my hand, as if she meant to convey her repentance, and communicate the purity of her own heart to mine,) who can be more sensible of the importance of this truth than ourselves? What sorrow and troubles, what tears and remorse we might have prevented for so many years past, if we could but have foreseen how dangerous a private intercourse was to that virtue which we always loved!

"Besides, (said Mrs. Wolmar, in a softer tone,) it is not in a numerous assembly, where we are seen and heard by all

the world, but in private parties, where secrecy and freedom is indulged, that our morals are in danger. It is from this principle, that, whenever my domestics meet, I am glad to see them all together. I even approve of their inviting such young people in the neighbourhood whose company will not corrupt them; and I hear with pleasure, that, when they mean to commend the morals of any of our young neighbours, they say—He is admitted at Mr. Wolmar's. We have a further view in this. Our men-servants are all very young, and, among the women, the governess is yet single; it is not reasonable that the retired life they lead with us should debar them of an opportunity of forming an honest connection. We endeavour, therefore, in these little meetings, to give them this opportunity, under our inspection, that we may assist them in their choice; and thus, by endeavouring to make happy families, we increase the felicity of our own.

"I ought now to justify myself for dancing with these good people, but I rather choose to pass sentence on myself in this respect, and frankly confess that my chief motive is the pleasure I take in the exercise. You know that I always resembled my cousin in her passion for dancing; but after the death of my mother, I bade adieu to the ball, and all public assemblies; I kept my resolution, even to the day of my marriage, and will keep it still, without thinking it any violation to dance now and then in my own house with my guests and my domestics. It is an exercise very good for my health during the sedentary life which we are obliged to live here in winter. I find it an innocent amusement; for after a good dance my conscience does not reproach me. It amuses M. Wolmar likewise, and all my coquetry in this particular is only to please him. I am the occasion of his coming into the ball-room; the good people are best satisfied when they are honoured with their master's presence; and

they express a satisfaction when they see me amongst them. In short, I find that such occasional familiarity forms an agreeable connection and attachment between us, which approaches nearer the natural condition of mankind, by moderating the meanness of servitude, and the rigour of authority."

Such, my Lord, are the sentiments of Eloisa with respect to dancing; and I have often wondered how so much affability could consist with such a degree of subordination, and how she and her husband could so often stoop to level themselves with their servants, and yet the latter never be tempted to assume equality in their turn. I question if any Asiatic monarchs are attended in their palaces with more respect than Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar are served in their own house. I never knew any commands less imperious than theirs, or more readily executed; if they ask for any thing, their servants fly; if they excuse their failings, they themselves are nevertheless sensible of their faults. I was never better convinced how much the force of what is said depends on the mode of expression.

This has led me into a reflection on the affected gravity of masters; which is, that it is rather to be imputed to their own failings, than to the effects of their familiarity, that they are despised in their families, and that the insolence of servants is rather an indication of a vicious than of a weak master: for nothing gives them such assurances, as the knowledge of his vices, and they consider all discoveries of that kind as so many dispensations, which free them from their obedience to a man whom they can no longer respect.

Servants imitate their masters, and by copying them awkwardly, they render those defects more conspicuous in themselves, which the polish of education, in some measure, disguised in the others. At Paris, I used to judge of the ladies

of my acquaintance, by the air and manners of their waiting-women; and this rule never deceived me. Besides that the lady's woman, when she becomes the confidant of her mistress's secrets, makes her buy her discretion at a dear rate, she likewise frames her conduct according to her lady's sentiments, and discloses all her maxims, by an awkward imitation. In every instance, the master's example is more efficacious than his authority; it is not natural to suppose that their servants will be honester than themselves. It is to no purpose to make a noise, to swear, to abuse them, to turn them off, to get a new set; all this avails nothing towards making good servants. When they who do not trouble themselves about being hated and despised by their domestics, nevertheless imagine that they are well served, the reason of their mistake is, that they are contented with what they see, and satisfied with an appearance of diligence, without observing the thousand secret prejudices they suffer continually, and of which they cannot discover the source. But where is the man so devoid of honour, as to be able to endure the contempt of every one round him? Where is the woman so abandoned, as not to be susceptible of insults? How many ladies, both at Paris and in London, who think themselves greatly respected, would burst into tears if they heard what was said of them in their antichambers? Happily for their peace, they comfort themselves by taking these Arguses for weak creatures, and by flattering themselves that they are blind to those practices which they do not even deign to hide from them. They likewise in their turn discover, by their sullen obedience, the contempt they have for their mistresses. Masters and servants become mutually sensible that it is not worth their while to conciliate each other's esteem.

The behaviour of servants seems to me to be the most certain and nice proof of the master's virtue; and I remember,

my Lord, to have formed a good opinion of yours at Valais, without knowing you, purely because, though you spoke somewhat harshly to your attendants, they were not the less attached to you, and that they expressed as much respect for you in your absence, as if you had been within hearing. It has been said that no man is a hero in the eyes of his valet-de-chambre: perhaps not; but every worthy man will enjoy his servant's esteem, which sufficiently proves that heroism is only a vain phantom, and that nothing is solid but virtue. The power of its empire is particularly observable here in the lowest commendations of the servants: commendations the less to be suspected, as they do not consist of vain eulogiums, but of an artless expression of their feelings. As they cannot suppose from any thing which they see, that other masters are not like theirs, they therefore do not commend them on account of those virtues which they conceive to be common to masters in general, but, in the simplicity of their hearts, they thank God for having sent the rich to make those under them happy, and to be a comfort to the poor.

Servitude is a state so unnatural to mankind, that it cannot subsist without some degree of discontent. Nevertheless, they respect their master, and say nothing. If any murmurings escape them against their mistress, they are more to her honour than encomiums would be. No one complains that she is wanting in kindness to them, but that she pays so much regard to others; no one can endure that his zeal should be put in competition with that of his comrades; and as every one imagines himself foremost in attachment, he would be first in favour. This is their only complaint, and their greatest injustice.

There is not only a proper subordination among those of inferior station, but a perfect harmony among those of equal

rank; and this is not the least difficult part of domestic economy.—Amidst the clashings of jealousy and self-interest, which make continual divisions in families not more numerous than this, we seldom find servants united but at the expence of their masters. If they agree, it is to rob in concert; if they are honest, every one shows his importance at the expence of the rest: they must either be enemies or accomplices; and it is very difficult to find a way of guarding, at the same time, both against their knavery and their dissensions. The masters of families, in general, know no other method but that of choosing the alternative between these two inconveniences. Some, preferring interest to honour, foment a quarrelsome disposition among their servants, by means of private reports, and think it a master-piece of prudence to make them superintendants and spies over each other. Others, of a more indolent nature, rather choose that their servants should rob them, and live peaceably among themselves; they pique themselves upon discountenancing any information which a faithful servant may give them out of pure zeal. Both are equally to blame. The first, by exciting continual disturbances in their families, which are incompatible with good order and regularity, get together a heap of knaves and informers, who are busy in betraying their fellow-servants, that they may hereafter perhaps betray their masters. The second, by refusing any information with regard to what passes in their families, countenance combinations against themselves, encourage the wicked, dishearten the good, and only maintain a pack of arrogant and idle rascals, at a great expence, who, agreeing together at their master's cost, look upon their services as a matter of favour, and their thefts as perquisites*.

* I have narrowly examined into the management of great families, and have found it impossible for a master who has

It is a capital error in domestic as well as in civil economy, to oppose one vice to another, or to attempt an equilibrium between them, as if that which undermines the foundations of all order could ever tend to establish regularity.—This mistaken policy only serves to unite every inconvenience. When particular vices are tolerated in a family, they do not reign alone. Let one take root, a thousand will soon spring up. They presently ruin the servants who harbour them, undo the master who tolerates them, and corrupt or injure the children who remark them with attention. What father can be so unworthy as to put any advantage whatever in competition with this last inconvenience? What honest man would choose to be master of a family, if it was impossible for him to maintain peace and fidelity in his house at the same time, and if he must be obliged to purchase the attachment of his servants at the expence of their mutual good understanding?

Who does not see, that in this family, they have not even an idea of any such difficulty? so much does the union among the several members proceed from the attachment to the head.—It is here we may perceive a striking instance how impossible it is to have a sincere affection for a master without loving every thing that belongs to him; a truth which is the real foundation of Christian charity. Is it not very natural that the children of the same father should live together like brethren? This is what they tell us every day at church,

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twenty servants, to know whether he has one honest man among them, and not to mistake the greatest rascal perhaps to be that one. This alone would give me an aversion to riches. The rich lose one of the sweetest pleasures of life, the pleasure of confidence and esteem. They purchase all their gold at a dear rate!

without making us feel the sentiment; and this is what the domestics in this family feel, without being told it.

This disposition to good fellowship is owing to a choice of proper subjects. M. Wolmar, when he hires his servants, does not examine whether they suit his wife and himself, but whether they suit each other; and if they were to discover a settled antipathy between two of the best servants, it would be sufficient for them to discharge one: for, says Eloisa, in so small a family, a family where they never go abroad, but are constantly before each other, they ought to agree perfectly among themselves. They ought to consider it as their father's house, where all are of the same family. One who happens to be disagreeable to the rest is enough to make them hate the place; and that disagreeable object being constantly before their eyes, they would neither be easy themselves, nor suffer us to be quiet.

After having made the best assortment in their power, they unite them, as it were, by the services which they oblige each to render the other, and they contrive that it shall be the real interest of every one to be beloved by his fellow servants. No one is so well received who solicits a favour for himself, as when he asks it for another; so that whoever has any thing to request, endeavours to engage another to intercede for him; and this they do with greater readiness, since, whether their master grants or refuses the favour requested, he never fails to acknowledge the merit of the person interceding. On the contrary, both he and Mrs. Wolmar always reject the solicitations of those who only regard themselves. Why, say they, should I grant what is desired in your favour, who have never made me any request in favour of another? Is it reasonable that you should be more favoured than your companions, because they are more obliging than you? They do more: they engage them to serve

each other in private without any ostentation, and without assuming any merit. This is the more easily accomplished, as they know that their master, who is witness of their discretion, will esteem them the more; thus self-interest is a gainer, and self-love no loser. They are so convinced of this general disposition to oblige, and they have such confidence in each other, that when they have any favour to ask, they frequently mention it at table, by way of conversation; very often, without further trouble, they find that the thing has been requested and granted, and as they do not know whom to thank, their obligation is to all.

It is by this and such like methods, that they beget an attachment among them, resulting from, and subordinate to, the zeal they have for their master. Thus, far from leaguing together to his prejudice, they are only united for his service. However it may be their interest to love each other, they have still stronger motives for pleasing him; their zeal for his service gets the better of their mutual good-will, and each considering himself as injured by losses which may make their master less able to recompense a faithful servant, they are all equally incapable of suffering any individual to do him wrong unnoticed. This principle of policy, which is established in this family, seems to have somewhat sublime in it; and I cannot sufficiently admire how Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar have been able to transform the vile function of an informer into an office of zeal, integrity, and courage, as noble, or at least as praise-worthy, as it was among the Romans.

They began by subverting, or rather by preventing, in a plain and perspicuous manner, and by affecting instances, that servile and criminal practice, that mutual toleration at the master's cost, which a worthless servant never fails to inculcate to a good one, under the mask of a charitable maxim. They made them understand, that the precept,

which enjoins us to hide our neighbour's faults, relates to those only which do injury to no one; that if they are witnesses to any injustice which injures a third person, and do not discover it, they are guilty of it themselves; and that as nothing can oblige us to conceal such faults in others, but a consciousness of our own defects; therefore no one would choose to countenance knaves, if he was not a knave himself. Upon these principles, which are just in general as between man and man, but more strictly so with respect to the close connection between master and servant, they hold it here as an incontestable truth, that whoever sees their master wronged, without making a discovery, is more guilty than he who did the wrong; for he suffers himself to be misled by the prospect of advantage, but the other, in cold blood, and without any view of interest, can be induced to secrecy by no other motive than a thorough disregard of justice, an indifference towards the welfare of the family he serves, and a hidden desire of copying the example he conceals. Therefore, even where the fault is considerable, the guilty party may nevertheless sometimes hope for pardon, but the witness who conceals the fact is infallibly dismissed, as a man of bad disposition.

In return, they receive no accusation which may be suspected to proceed from injustice and calumny; that is to say, they admit of none in the absence of the accused. If any one comes to make a report against his fellow-servant, or to prefer a personal complaint against him, they ask him whether he is sufficiently informed, that is to say, whether he has entered into any previous inquiry with the person whom he is going to accuse? If he answers in the negative, they ask him how he can judge of an action, when he is not acquainted with the motives to it? The fact, say they, may depend on some circumstance to which you are a stranger;

there may be some particulars which may serve to justify or excuse it, and which you know nothing of. How can you presume to condemn any one's conduct, before you know by what motives it is directed? One word of explanation would probably have rendered it justifiable in your eyes. Why then do you run the risk of condemning an action wrongfully, and of exposing me to participate of your injustice? If he assures them that he has entered into a previous explanation with the accused; why then, say they, do you come without him, as if you was afraid that he would falsify what you are going to relate? By what right do you neglect taking the same precaution with respect to me, which you think proper to use with regard to yourself? Is it reasonable to desire me to judge of a fact from your report, of which you refuse to judge yourself by the testimony of your own eyes; and would not you be answerable for the partial judgment I might form, if I was to remain satisfied with your bare deposition? In the end, they direct them to summon the party accused: if they consent, the matter is soon decided; if they refuse, they dismiss them with a severe reprimand, but they keep the secret, and watch them both so narrowly, that they are not long at a loss to know which is in fault.

This rule is so well known, and so well established, that you never hear a servant in this family speak ill of his absent comrade, for they are all sensible that it is the way to pass for a liar and a coward. When any one of them accuses another, it is openly, frankly, and not only to his face, but in the presence of all his fellow-servants, that they who are witnesses to their accusation, may be vouchers of their integrity. In case of any personal disputes among them, the difference is generally made up by mediators, without troubling Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar: but when the interest of the master is at stake, the matter cannot remain a secret; the

guilty party must either accuse himself, or be accused. These little pleadings happen very seldom, and never but at table, in the rounds which Eloisa makes every day while her people are at dinner or supper, which M. Wolmar pleasantly calls her general sessions. After having patiently attended to the accusation and the defence, if the affairs regard her interest, she thanks the accuser for his zeal. I am sensible, says she, that you have a regard for your fellow-servant; you have always spoken well of him, and I commend you, because the love of your duty and of justice has prevailed over your private affections; it is thus that a faithful servant and an honest man ought to behave. If the party accused is not in fault, she always subjoins some compliment to her justification of his innocence. But if he is really guilty, she in some measure spares his shame before the rest. She supposes that he has something to communicate in his defence, which he does not choose to declare in public; she appoints an hour to hear him in private, and it is then that she or her husband talk to him as they think proper. What is very remarkable, is that the most severe of the two is not most dreaded, and that they are less afraid of M. Wolmar's solemn reprimand, than of Eloisa's affecting reproaches. The former speaking the language of truth and justice, humbles and confounds the guilty; the latter strikes them with the most cruel remorse, by convincing them with what regret she is forced to withdraw her kindness from them. She sometimes extorts tears of grief and shame from them, and it is not uncommon for her to be moved herself when she sees them repent, in hopes that she may not be obliged to abide by her word.

They who judge of these concerns by what passes in their own families, or among their neighbours, would probably deem them frivolous or tiresome. But you, my Lord, who have such high notions of the duties and enjoyments of a

master of a family, and who are sensible what an ascendancy natural disposition and virtue have over the human heart, you perceive the importance of these minutiæ, and know on what circumstances their success depends. Riches do not make a man rich, as is well observed in some romance. The wealth of a man is not in his coffers, but in the use he makes of what he draws out of them; for our possessions do not become our own, but by the uses to which we allot them, and abuses are always more inexhaustible than riches; whence it happens that our enjoyments are not in proportion to our expences, but depend on the just regulation of them. An idiot may toss ingots of gold into the sea, and say he has enjoyed them; but what comparison is there between such an extravagant enjoyment, and that which a wise man would have derived from the least part of their value? Order and regularity, which multiply and perpetuate the use of riches, are alone capable of converting the enjoyment of them into felicity. But if real property arises from the relation which our possessions bear to us, if it is rather the use than the acquisition of riches which confers it, what can be more proper subjects of attention for a master of a family than domestic economy, and the prudent regulation of his household, in which the most perfect correspondences more immediately concern him, and where the happiness of every individual is an addition to the felicity of the head?

Are the most wealthy the most happy? No. How then does wealth contribute to felicity? But every well-regulated family is emblematic of the master's mind. Gilded ceilings, luxury, and magnificence, only serve to show the vanity of those who display such parade; whereas, whenever you see order without melancholy, peace without slavery, plenty without profusion, you may say, with confidence, the master of this house is a happy being.

For my own part, I think the most certain sign of true content is a domestic and retired life, and that they who are continually resorting to others in quest of happiness do not enjoy it at home. A father of a family, who amuses himself at home, is rewarded for his continual attention to domestic concerns, by the constant enjoyment of the most agreeable sensations of nature. He is the only one who can be properly said to be master of his own happiness, because, like Heaven itself, he is happy in desiring nothing more than he enjoys. Like the Supreme Being, he does not wish to enlarge his possessions, but to make them really his own, under proper directions, and by using them conformably to the just relations of things: if he does not enrich himself by new acquisitions, he enriches himself by the true enjoyment of what he possesses. He once only enjoyed the income of his lands, he now enjoys the lands themselves, by overlooking their culture, and surveying them from time to time. His servant was a stranger to him: he is now part of his enjoyment; his child: he makes him his own. Formerly he had only power over his servant's actions; now he has authority over his inclinations. He was his master only by paying him wages; now he rules by the sacred dominion of benevolence and esteem. Though fortune spoils him of his wealth, she can never rob him of those affections which are attached to him; she cannot deprive a father of his children; all the difference is, that he maintained them yesterday, and that they will support him to-morrow. It is thus that we may learn the true enjoyment of our riches, of our family, and of ourselves; it is thus, that the minutiæ of a family become agreeable to a worthy man who knows the value of them; it is thus, that far from considering these little duties as troublesome, he makes them a part of his happiness, and derives the glory and pleasure of human nature from these noble and affecting offices.

If these precious advantages are despised, or little known, and if the few who endeavour to acquire them seldom obtain them, the reason, in both cases, is the same. There are many simple and sublime duties, which few people can relish and fulfil. Such are those of the master of a family, for which the air and bustle of the world give him a disgust, and which he never discharges properly when he is only inflamed by motives of avarice and interest. Some think themselves excellent masters, and are only careful economists; their income may thrive, and their family nevertheless be in a bad condition. They ought to have more enlarged views to direct an administration of such importance, so as to give it a happy issue. The first thing to be attended to in the due regulation of a family, is to admit none but honest people, who will not have any secret intention to disturb that regularity. But are honesty and servitude so compatible, that we may hope to find servants who are honest men? No, my Lord, if we would have them, we must not inquire for them, but we must make them; and none who are not men of integrity themselves, are capable of making others honest. It is to no purpose for a hypocrite to affect an air of virtue; he will never inspire any one with an affection for it, and if he knew how to make virtue amiable, he would be in love with it himself. What do formal lessons avail, when daily example contradicts them, unless to make us suspect that the moralist means to sport with our credulity? What an absurdity are they guilty of, who exhort us to do as they say, and not as they act themselves!—He who does not act up to what he says, never speaks to any effect; for the language of the heart is wanting, which alone is persuasive and affecting. I have sometimes heard conversations of this kind held in a gross manner before servants, in order to read them lectures, as they do children sometimes, in an indirect way. Far

from having any reason to imagine that they were the dupes of such artifice, I have always observed them smile in secret at their master's folly, who must have taken them for block-heads, by making an awkward display of sentiments before them, which they knew were none of his own.

All these idle subtleties are unknown in this family, and the grand art by which the master and mistress make their servants what they would desire them to be, is to appear themselves before them what they really are. Their behaviour is always frank and open, because they are not in any fear lest their actions should belie their professions. As they themselves do not entertain principles of morality different from those which they inculcate to others, they have no occasion for any extraordinary circumspection in their discourse; a word blundered out unseasonably does not overthrow the principles they have laboured to establish. They do not indiscreetly tell all their affairs, but they openly proclaim all their maxims. Whether at table, or abroad, in private, or in public, their sentiments are still the same; they ingenuously deliver their opinions on every subject, and without their having any individual in view, every one is instructed by their conversation. As their servants never see them do any thing but what is just, reasonable, and equitable, they do not consider justice as a tax on the poor, as a yoke on the unhappy, and as one of the evils of their condition. The care they take never to let the labourers come in vain, and lose their day's work in seeking after their wages, teaches their servants to set a just value on time. When they see their master so careful of other men's time, each concludes that his own time must be of consequence, and therefore deems idleness the greatest crime he can be guilty of. The confidence which their servants have in their integrity gives that force to their regulations which makes them observed, and prevents

abuses. They are not afraid, when they come to receive their weekly gratuities, that their mistress should partially determine the youngest and most active to have been the most diligent. An old servant is not apprehensive lest they should start some quibble, to save the promised augmentation to their wages. They can never hope to take advantage of any division between their master and mistress, in order to make themselves of consequence, and to obtain from one what the other has refused. They who are unmarried are not afraid lest they should oppose their settlement, in order to detain them longer, and by that means make their service a prejudice to them. If a strange servant was to tell the domestics of this family, that master and servants are in a state of war with each other; that when the latter do the former all the injury they can, they only make lawful reprisals: that masters, being usurpers, liars, and knaves, there can consequently be no harm in using them as they use their prince, the people, or individuals, and in returning those injuries with dexterity, which they offer openly——————one who should talk in this manner would not be attended to; they would not give themselves the trouble to controvert or obviate such sentiments; they who give rise to them are the only persons whose business it is to refute them.

You never perceive any sullenness or discontent in the discharge of their duty, because there is never any haughtiness or capriciousness in the orders they receive; nothing is required of them but what is reasonable and expedient, and their master and mistress have too much respect for the dignity of human nature, even in a state of servitude, to put them upon any employment which may debase them. Moreover, nothing here is reckoned mean but vice, and whatever is reasonable and necessary is deemed honourable and becoming.

They do not allow of any intrigues abroad, neither has any one any inclinations of that kind. They are sensible that their fortune is most firmly attached to their master's, and that they shall never want any thing while his family prospers. Therefore, in serving him, they take of their own patrimony, and increase it by making their service agreeable: this, above all things, is their interest. But this word is somewhat misapplied here, for I never knew any system of policy by which self-interest was so skilfully directed, and where at the same time it had less influence, than in this family. They all act from a principle of attachment, and one would think that venal souls were purified as soon as they entered into this dwelling of wisdom and union. One would imagine that part of the master's intelligence, and of the mistress's sensibility, was conveyed to each of their servants; they seem so judicious, benevolent, honest, and so much above their station. Their greatest ambition is to do well, to be valued and esteemed; and they consider an obliging expression from their master or mistress in the light of a present.

These, my Lord, are the most material observations I have made on that part of the economy of this family which regards the servants and labourers. As to Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar's manner of living, and the education of their children, each of these articles very well deserves a separate letter. You know with what view I began these remarks; but in truth the whole forms such an agreeable representation, that we need only meditate upon it to advance it, and we require no other inducement than the pleasure it affords us.

LETTER CXXX.

TO LORD B——.

No, my Lord; I do not retract what I have said; in this family, the useful and agreeable are united throughout; but occupations of use are not confined to those pursuits which yield profit: they comprehend further every innocent and harmless amusement which may serve to improve a relish for retirement, labour, and temperance; which may contribute to preserve the mind in a vigorous state, and to keep the heart free from the agitation of tumultuous passions. If inactive indolence begets nothing but melancholy and irksomeness, the delights of an agreeable leisure are the fruits of a laborious life. We only work to enjoy ourselves; this alternative of labour and recreation is our natural state. The repose which serves to refresh us after past labours, and encourage us to renew them, is not less necessary for us than labour itself.

After having admired the good consequences attending the vigilance and attention of the prudent Eloisa, in the conduct of her family, I was witness of the good effects of the recreation she uses in a retired place, where she takes her favourite walk, and which she calls her Elysium.

I had often heard them talk of this Elysium, of which they made a mystery before me. Yesterday, however, the excessive heat being almost equally intolerable both within doors and without, M. Wolmar proposed to his wife to make holiday that afternoon, and instead of going into the nursery towards evening, as usual, to come and breathe the fresh air with us in the orchard: she consented, and thither we went.

This place, though just close to the house, is hidden in such a manner by a shady walk, that it is not visible from any point. The thick foliage with which it is environed renders it impervious to the eye, and it is always carefully locked up. I was scarce got within inside, but, the door being covered with alder and hazle-trees, I could not find out which way I came in; when I turned back, and seeing no door, it seemed as if I had dropped from the clouds.

On my entrance into this disguised orchard, I was seized with an agreeable sensation; the freshness of the thick foliage, the beautiful and lovely verdure, the flowers scattered on each side, the murmuring of the purling stream, and the warbling of a thousand birds, struck my imagination as powerfully as my senses; but at the same time I thought myself in the most wild and solitary place in nature, and I appeared as if I had been the first mortal who had ever penetrated into this desart spot. Being seized with astonishment, and transported at so unexpected a sight, I remained motionless for some time, and cried out, in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm, "O Tinian! O Juan Fernandez*! Eloisa, the world's end is at your threshold!"—"Many people (said she, with a smile) think in the same manner; but twenty paces at most presently brings them back to Clarens; let us see whether the charm will work longer upon you. This is the same orchard where you have walked formerly, and where you have played at romps with my cousin. You may remember that the grass was almost burned up, the trees thinly planted, affording very little shade, and that there was no water. You find that now it is fresh, verdant, cultivated, embellished with flowers, and well watered; what do you

* Desart islands in the South Sea, celebrated in Lord Anson's voyage.

imagine it may have cost me to put it into the condition you see? For you must know that I am the superintendant, and that my husband leaves the entire management of it to me." —"In truth, (said I,) it has cost you nothing but inattention. It is indeed a delightful spot, but wild and rustic; and I can discover no marks of human industry. You have concealed the door; the water springs I know not whence; Nature alone has done all the rest, and even you could not have mended her work."—"It is true, (said she,) that Nature has done every thing, but under my direction, and you see nothing but what has been done under my orders. Guess once more."—"First, (I replied,) I cannot conceive how labour and expence can be made to supply the effects of time. The trees . . . ."—"As to them, (said M. Wolmar,) you may observe that there are none very large, and they were here before. Besides, Eloisa began this work a long while before her marriage, and presently after her mother's death, when she used to come here with her father in quest of solitude."—"Well, (said I,) since you will have these large and massy bowers, these sloping tufts, these umbrageous thickets to be the growth of seven or eight years, and to be partly the work of art, I think you have been a good economist, if you have done all within this vast circumference for two thousand crowns."—"You have only guessed two thousand crowns too much, (said she,) for it cost me nothing."—"How! nothing!"—"No, nothing; unless you place a dozen days work in the year to my gardener's account, as many to two or three of my people, and some to M. Wolmar, who has sometimes condescended to officiate in my service as a gardener." I could not comprehend this riddle; but Eloisa, who had hitherto held me, said to me, (letting me loose,) "Go, and you will understand it. Farewell, Tinian! farewell, Juan Fernandez! farewell, all enchantment!

In a few minutes you will find your way back from the end of the world."

I began to wander over the orchard thus metamorphosed with a kind of ecstasy; and if I found no exotic plants, nor any of the products of the Indies, I found all those which were natural to the soil, disposed and blended in such a manner, as to produce the most cheerful and lively effect. The verdant turf, thick, but short and close, was intermixed with wild thyme, balm, sweet marjoram, and other fragrant herbs. You might perceive a thousand wild flowers dazzle your eyes; among which you would be surprized to discover some garden-flowers, which seemed to grow natural with the rest. I now and then met with shady tufts, as impervious to the rays of the sun, as if they had been in a thick forest. These tufts were composed of trees of a very flexible nature, the branches of which they bend, till they hang on the ground, and take root, as I have seen some trees naturally do in America. In the more open spots, I saw here and there bushes of roses, raspberries, and gooseberries: little plantations of lilac, hazle-trees, alders, seringa, broom, and trefoil, dispersed without any order or symmetry, and which embellished the ground, at the same time that it gave it the appearance of being overgrown with weeds. I followed the track through irregular and serpentine walks, bordered by these flowery thickets, and covered with a thousand garlands composed of vines, hops, rose-weed, snake-weed, and other plants of that kind, with which honeysuckles and jessamine deigned to intertwine. These garlands seemed as if they were carelessly scattered from one tree to another, and formed a kind of drapery over our heads, which sheltered us from the sun; while under foot we had smooth, agreeable, and dry walking upon a fine moss, without sand or grass, or any rugged shoots. Then it was I first discovered, not with-

out astonishment, that this verdant and bushy umbrage, which had deceived me so much at a distance, was composed of these luxuriant and creeping plants, which running all along the trees, formed a thick foliage over head, and afforded shade and freshness under foot. I observed, likewise, that by means of common industry, they had made several of these plants take root in the trunks of the trees, so that they spread more, being nearer the top. You will readily conceive that the fruit is not the better for these additions; but this is the only spot where they have sacrificed the useful to the agreeable, and in the rest of their grounds they have taken such care of the trees, that, without the orchard, the return of fruit is greater than it was formerly. If you do but consider how delightful it is to meet with wild fruit in the midst of a wood, and to refresh oneself with it, you will easily conceive what a pleasure it must be to meet with excellent and ripe fruit in this artificial desart, though it grows but here and there, and has not the best appearance: which gives one the pleasure of searching, and selecting the best.

All these little walks were bordered and crossed by a clear and limpid rivulet, which one while winded through the grass and flowers, in streams scarce perceptible; at another, rushed in more copious floods upon a clear and speckled gravel, which rendered the water more transparent. You might perceive the springs rise and bubble out of the earth, and sometimes you might observe deep canals, in which the calm and gentle fluid served as a mirror to reflect the objects around. "Now (said I to Eloisa) I comprehend all the rest; but these waters which I see on every side."—"They come from thence," she replied, pointing to that side where the terrace lies. "It is the same stream which, at a vast expence, supplied the fountain in the flower-garden, for

which nobody cares. M. Wolmar will not destroy it, out of respect to my father, who had it made; but with what pleasure we come here every day to see this water run through the orchard, which we never look at in the garden!—The fountain plays for the entertainment of strangers; this little rivulet flows for our amusement. It is true, that I have likewise brought hither the water from the public fountain, which emptied itself into the lake, through the highway, to the detriment of passengers, besides its running to waste, without profit to any one. It formed an elbow at the foot of the orchard, between two rows of willows; I have taken them within my inclosure, and I bring the same water hither through different channels."

I perceived then that all the contrivance consisted in managing these streams, so as to make them flow in meanders, by separating and uniting them at proper places, by making them run as little upon the slope as possible, in order to lengthen their course, and make the most of a few little murmuring cascades. A lay of earth, covered with some gravel from the lake, and strewed over with shells, forms a bed for these waters.—The same streams running at proper distances under some large tiles covered with earth and turf, on a level with the ground, form a kind of artificial springs, where they issue forth. Some small streams spout through pipes on some rugged places, and bubble as they fall. The ground thus refreshed and watered, continually yields fresh flowers, and keeps the grass always verdant and beautiful.

The more I wandered over this delightful asylum, the more I found the agreeable sensation improve which I experienced at my first entrance: nevertheless my curiosity kept me in exercise; I was more eager to view the objects around me than to enquire into the cause of the impressions they made on me, and I chose to resign myself to that delightful

contemplation, without taking the trouble of reflection; but Mrs. Wolmar drew me out of my reverie, by taking me under the arm. "All that you see (said she) is nothing but vegetable and inanimate nature, which, in spite of us, always leaves behind it a melancholy idea of solitude. Come and view nature animated and more affecting. There you will discover some new charm every minute in the day."—"You anticipate me, (said I;) I hear a confused chirping noise, and I see but few birds; I suppose you have an aviary."—"True, (said she;) let us go to it." I durst not as yet declare what I thought of this aviary; but there was something in the idea of it which disgusted me, and did not seem to correspond with the rest.

We went down through a thousand turnings, to the bottom of the orchard, where I found all the water collected in a fine rivulet, flowing gently between two rows of old willows, which had been frequently lopped. Their tops being hollow, and half bare, formed a kind of vessel, from whence, by the contrivance I just now mentioned, grew several tufts of honeysuckles, of which one part intertwined among the branches, and the other dropped carelessly along the side of the rivulet. Near the extremity of the inclosure was a little bason bordered with grass, bulrushes, and weeds, which served as a watering-place to the aviary, and was the last use made of this water, so precious and so well husbanded.

Somewhat beyond this bason was a platform, which was terminated, in an angle of the inclosure, by a hillock planted with a number of little trees of all kinds; the smallest stood towards the summit, and their size increased in proportion as the ground grew lower, which made their tops appear to be horizontal, or at least showed that they were one day intended to be so. In the front stood a dozen of trees, which were young as yet, but of a nature to grow very large, such as

the beech, the elm, the ash, and the acacia. The groves on this side served as an asylum to that vast number of birds which I had heard chirping at a distance, and it was under the shade of this foliage, as under a large umbrella, that you might see them hop about, run, frisk, provoke each other, and fight, as if they had not perceived us. They were so far from flying at our approach, that, according to the notion with which I was prepossessed, I imagined them to have been inclosed within a wire; but when we came to the border of the bason, I saw several of them alight, and come towards us through a short walk, which parted the platform in two, and made a communication between the bason and the aviary. M. Wolmar then going round the bason, scattered two or three handfuls of mixed grain, which he had in his pocket, along the walk, and when he retired, the birds flocked together, and began to feed like so many chickens, with such an air of familiarity, that I plainly perceived they had been trained up to it. "This is charming (said I): your using the word aviary, surprized me at first, but I now see what it is; I perceive that you invite them as your guests, instead of confining them as your prisoners."—"What do you mean by our guests? (replied Eloisa;) it is we who are theirs. They are masters here, and we pay them for being admitted sometimes."—"Very well, (said I;) but how did these masters get possession of this spot? How did you collect together so many voluntary inhabitants? I never heard of any attempt of this kind, and I could not have believed that such a design could have succeeded, if I had not evidence of it before my eyes."

"Time and patience (said M. Wolmar) have worked this miracle. These are expedients which the rich scarce ever think of in their pleasures. Always in haste for enjoyment, force and money are the only instruments they know how to em-

ploy; they have birds in cages, and friends at so much a month. If the servants ever came near this place, you would soon see the birds disappear; and if you perceive vast numbers of them at present, the reason is, that this spot has always, in some degree, been a refuge for them. There is no bringing them together where there are none to invite them; but where there are some already, it is easy to increase their numbers, by anticipating all their wants, by not frightening them, by suffering them to hatch with security, and by never disturbing the young ones in their nest; for by these means, such as are there abide there, and these which come after them continue. This grove was already in being, though it was divided from the orchard; Eloisa has only inclosed it by a quickset hedge, removed that which parted it, and enlarged and adorned it with new designs. You see to the right and left of the walk which leads to it two spaces filled with a confused mixture of grass, straw, and all sorts of plants. She orders them every year to be sown with corn, millet, turnsol, hemp-seed, vetch, and, in general, all sorts of grain which birds are fond of, and nothing is ever reaped. Besides this, almost every day she or I bring them something to eat, and when we neglect, Fanny supplies our place. They are supplied with water, as you see, very easily. Mrs. Wolmar carries her attention so far as to provide for them, every spring, little heaps of hair, straw, wool, moss, and other materials proper to build their nests. Thus, by their having materials at hand, provisions in abundance, and by the great care we take to secure them from their enemies*, the uninterrupted tranquillity they enjoy induces them to lay their eggs in this convenient place, where they want for

* The mice, owls, hawks, and, above all, children.

nothing, and where nobody disturbs them. Thus the habitation of the fathers becomes the abode of the children, and the colony thrives and multiplies."

"Ah! (said Eloisa,) do you see nothing more? No one thinks beyond himself; but the affection of a constant pair, the zeal of their domestic concerns, paternal and maternal fondness, all this is lost upon you. Had you been here two months ago, you might have feasted your eyes with the most lovely sight, and have gratified your feelings with the most tender sensations in nature."—"Madam, (said I, somewhat gravely,) you are a wife and a mother; these are pleasures of which it becomes you to be susceptible." M. Wolmar then taking me cordially by the hand, said, "You have friends, and those friends have children; how can you be a stranger to paternal affection?" I looked at him, I looked at Eloisa, they looked at each other, and cast such an affecting eye upon me, that embracing them alternately, I said, with tender emotion, "They are as dear to me as to yourself." I do not know by what strange effect a single word can make such an alteration in our minds, but since that moment M. Wolmar appears to me quite another man, and I consider him less in the light of a husband to her whom I have so long adored, as in that of the father of two children for whom I would lay down my life.

I was going to walk around the bason, in order to draw nearer to this delightful asylum, and its little inhabitants, but Mrs. Wolmar checked me. "Nobody (said she) goes to disturb them in their dwelling, and you are the first of our guests whom I ever brought so far. There are four keys to this orchard, of which my father and we have each of us one: Fanny has the fourth, as superintendant, and to bring the children here now and then; the value of which favour

is greatly enhanced by the extreme circumspection which is required of them while they are here. Even Gustin never comes hither without one of the four: when the two spring months are over, in which his labours are useful, he scarce ever comes hither afterwards, and all the rest we do ourselves." "Thus (said I), for fear of making your birds slaves to you, you make yourselves slaves to your birds."—"This (she replied) is exactly the sentiment of a tyrant, who never thinks that he enjoys liberty, but while he is disturbing the freedom of others."

As we were coming back, M. Wolmar threw a handful of barley into the bason, and on looking into it, I perceived some little fish. "Ah, ah, (said I, immediately) here are some prisoners nevertheless."—"Yes, (said he,) they are prisoners of war, who have had their lives spared."—"Without doubt (added his wife). Some time since, Fanny stole two perch out of the kitchen, and brought them hither without my knowledge. I leave them here, for fear of offending her if I sent them to the lake; for it is better to confine the fish in too narrow a compass, than to disoblige a worthy creature."—"You are in the right, (said I,) and the fish are not much to be pitied for having escaped from the frying-pan into the water."

"Well, how does it appear to you? (said she, as we were coming back,) are you got to the end of the world yet?—"No, (I replied,) I am quite out of the world, and you have in truth transported me into Elysium."—The pompous name she has given this orchard, (said M. Wolmar,) very well deserves that raillery. Be modest in your commendation of childish amusements, and be assured that they have never entrenched on the concerns of a mistress of a family."—"I know it, I am sure of it (I replied;) and childish amuse-

ments please me more in this way, than the labours of men."

"Still there is one thing here (I continued) which I cannot conceive, which is, that though a place so different from what it was, can never have been altered to its present state but by great care and culture, yet I can no where discover the least trace of cultivation. Every thing is verdant, fresh, and vigorous, and the hand of the gardener is no where to be discerned: nothing contradicts the idea of a desert island, which struck me at my first entrance, and I cannot perceive any footsteps of men."—"O, (said M. Wolmar,) it is because they have taken great pains to efface them. I have been frequently witness to, and sometimes an accomplice in this roguery. They sow all the cultivated spots with grass, which presently hides all appearance of culture. In the winter, they cover all the dry and barren spots with some lays of manure; the manure eats up the moss, revives the grass and the plants; the trees themselves do not fare the worse, and in the summer there is nothing of it to be seen. With regard to the moss which covers some of the walks, Lord B—— sent us the secret of making it grow from England. These two sides (he continued) were inclosed with walls; the walls have been covered, not with hedges, but with thick trees, which make the boundaries of the place appear like the beginning of a wood. The two other sides are secured by strong thickset hedges, well stocked with maple, hawthorne, holy-oak, privet, and other small trees, which destroy the appearance of the hedges, and make them look more like coppice woods. You see nothing here in an exact row, nothing level: the line never entered this place; nature plants nothing by the line; the affected irregularity of the winding walks is managed with art, in order to pro-

long the walk, to hide the boundaries of the island, and to enlarge in appearance, without making inconvenient and too frequent turnings*."

Upon considering the whole, I thought it somewhat extraordinary that they should take so much pains to conceal the labour they had been at; would it not have been better to have taken no such pains? "Notwithstanding all we have told you, (replied Eloisa,) you judge of the labour from its effect, and you deceive yourself. All that you see are wild and vigorous plants, which need only to be put into the earth, and which afterwards spring up of themselves. Besides, nature seems desirous of hiding her real charms from the sight of men, because they are too little sensible of them, and disfigure them when they are within their reach; she flies from public places; it is in the tops of mountains, in the midst of forests, in desert islands, that she displays her most affecting charms. They who are in love with her, and cannot go so far in pursuit of her, are forced to do her violence, by obliging her, in some measure, to come and dwell with them; and all this cannot be effected without some degree of illusion."

At these words, I was struck with an idea which made them laugh. "I am supposing to myself (said I) some rich man to be master of this house, and to bring an architect who is paid an extravagant price for spoiling nature. With what disdain would he enter this plain and simple spot! With what contempt would he order these ragged plants to be torn up! What fine lines he would draw!——What fine walks he would cut!—— What fine geese-feet, what fine trees in the shape of umbrellas and fans he would make! What

* Like those fashionable little woods, so ridiculously twisted, that you are obliged to walk in a zigzag manner, and to make a *pirouette* at every step.

fine arbour-work—nicely cut out! What beautiful grass-plats of fine English turf, round, square, sloping, oval! What fine yew-trees cut in the shape of dragons, pagods, marmosets, and all sorts of monsters! With what fine vases of brass, with what fine fruit in stone he would decorate his garden* !"—"When he had done all this, (said M. Wolmar,) he would have made a very fine place, which would scarce ever be frequented, and from whence one should always go with eagerness to enjoy the country; a dismal place, where nobody would walk, but only use it as a thoroughfare when they were setting out; whereas, in my rural rambles, I often make haste to return, that I may walk here.

"I see nothing in those extensive grounds so lavishingly ornamented, but the vanity of the proprietor and of the artist, who being eager to display, the one his riches and the other his talents, only contribute, at a vast expence, to tire those who would enjoy their works. A false taste of grandeur, which was never designed for man, poisons all his pleasures. An air of greatness has always something melancholy in it; it leads us to consider the wretchedness of those who affect it. In the midst of these grass-plats and fine walks, the little individual does not grow greater; a tree twenty feet high will shelter him as well as one of sixty†; he never occupies

* I am persuaded, that some time hence gardens will be furnished with nothing belonging to the country; neither plants nor trees will be suffered to grow in them: we shall see nothing but China flowers, baboons, arbour-work, gravel of all colours, and fine vases with nothing in them.

† He might have enlarged on the bad taste of lopping trees in such a ridiculous manner, to make them shoot into the clouds, by taking off their fine tops, by draining the sap, and preventing their thriving. This method, it is true, supplies the gardeners with wood, but it robs the kingdom of it, which is not overstocked already. One would imagine that nature was different in France

a space of more than three feet, and, in the midst of his immense possessions, is lost like a poor worm.

"There is another taste directly opposite to this, and still more ridiculous, because it does not allow us the pleasure of walking, for which gardens were intended."—"I understand you (said I); you allude to those petty virtuosi, who die away at the sight of a ranuncula, and fall prostrate before a tulip." Hereupon, my Lord, I gave them an account of what happened to me formerly at London, in the flower-garden into which we were introduced with so much ceremony, and where we saw all the treasures of Holland displayed with so much lustre upon four beds of dung. I did not forget the ceremony of the umbrella and the little rod with which they honoured me, unworthy as I was, as well as the rest of the spectators. I modestly acknowledged how, by endeavouring to appear a virtuoso in my turn, and venturing to fall in ecstasies at the sight of a tulip which seemed to be of a fine shape, and of a lively colour, I was mocked, hooted at, and hissed by all the connoisseurs, and how the florist, who despised the flower, despised its panegyrist likewise to that degree, that he did not even deign to look at me all the time we were together. I added, that I supposed he highly regretted having prostituted his rod and umbrella on one so unworthy."

"This taste, (said M. Wolmar,) when it degenerates into a passion, has something idle and little in it, which renders it puerile, and ridiculously expensive. The other, at least, is noble, grand, and has something real in it. But what is

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from what it is in any other part of the world, they take so much pains to disfigure her. The parks are planted with nothing but long poles; they are like so many forests of masts, and you walk in the midst of woods without finding any shelter.

the value of a curious root, which an insect gnaws or spoils perhaps as soon as it is purchased, or of a flower which is beautiful at noon-day, and fades before sun-set; what signifies a mere imaginary beauty, which is only obvious to the eyes of virtuosi, and which is a beauty only because they will have it to be so? The time will come when they will require different kinds of beauty in flowers from that which they seek after at present, and with as good reason; then you will be the connoisseur in your turn, and your virtuoso will appear ignorant. All these trifling attentions, which degenerate into a kind of study, are unbecoming a rational being, who would keep his body in moderate exercise, or relieve his mind by amusing himself in a walk with his friends. Flowers were made to delight our eyes as we pass along, and not to be so curiously anatomized*. See the queen of them shine in every part of the orchard: it perfumes the air, it ravishes the eyes, and costs neither care nor culture. It is for this reason that florists despise it; nature has made it so lovely, that they cannot add to it any borrowed beauty, and as they cannot plague themselves with cultivating it, they find nothing in it which flatters their fancy. The mistake of your pretenders to taste is, that they are desirous of introducing art in every thing, and are never satisfied unless the art appears: whereas true taste consists in concealing it, especially when it concerns any of the works of nature. To what purpose are those straight gravel-walks which we meet with continually; and those stars, which are so far from making a park appear more extensive to the view, as is commonly supposed, that

* The sagacious Wolmar had not sufficiently reflected. Was he, who was so skilful in judging of men, so bad a judge of nature? Did he not know that if the Author of Nature displays his greatness in great things, he appears still greater in those which are the least

they only contribute awkwardly to discover its boundaries? Do you ever see fine gravel in woods, or is that kind of gravel softer to the feet than moss or down? Does nature constantly make use of the square or rule? Are they afraid lest she should be visible in some spots, notwithstanding all their care to disfigure her? On the whole, it is droll enough to see them affect to walk in a straight line, that they may sooner reach the end, as if they were tired of walking before they have well begun. Would not one imagine, by their taking the shortest cut, that they were going a journey instead of a walk, and that they were in a hurry to get out as soon as they come in?

"How will a man of taste act, who lives to relish life, who knows how to enjoy himself, who pursues real and simple pleasures, and who is inclined to make a walk before his house? He will make it so convenient and agreeable, that he may enjoy it every hour of the day, and yet so natural and simple, that it will seem as if he had done nothing. He will introduce water, and will make the walk verdant, cool, and shady; for nature herself unites these properties. He will bestow no attention on symmetry, which is the bane of nature and variety, and the walks of gardens in general are so like each other, that we always fancy ourselves in the same. He will make the ground smooth, in order to walk more conveniently; but the two sides of his walks will not be exactly parallel; their direction will not always be rectilineal; they will be somewhat irregular, like the steps of an indolent man, who saunters in his walk: he will not be anxious about opening distant perspectives. The taste for perspective and distant views proceeds from the disposition of men in general, who are never satisfied with the place where they are. They are always desirous of what is distant from them, and the artist who cannot make them contented with

the objects around them, flies to this resource to amuse them: but such a man as I speak of, is under no such inquietudes, and when he is agreeably fixed, he does not desire to be elsewhere. Here, for example, we have no prospect, and we are very well satisfied without any. We are willing to think that all the charms of nature are inclosed here, and I should be very much afraid lest a distant view should take off a good deal of the beauty from this walk*. Certainly, he who would not choose to pass his days in this simple and pleasant place is not master of true taste, or of a vigorous mind. I confess that one ought not to make a parade of bringing strangers hither; but then we can enjoy it ourselves, without showing it to any one."

"Sir, (said I,) those rich people who have such fine gardens, have very good reasons for not choosing to walk alone, or to be in company with themselves only: therefore, they are in the right to lay them out for the pleasure of others. Besides, I have seen gardens in China, made after your taste, and laid out with so much art, that the art was

* I do not know whether there has ever been an attempt to give a slight curve to these long walks, that the eye may not be able to reach the end of the walk, and that the opposite extremity may be hid from the spectator. It is true, the beauty of the prospects in perspective would be lost by these means; but proprietors would reap one advantage which they generally prize at a high rate, which is that of making their grounds more extensive in appearance; and, in the midst of a starry plot thus bounded, one might think himself in a vast park. I am persuaded that the walk would be less tiresome, though more solitary; for, whatever gives play to the imagination, excites ideas, and nourishes the mind: but gardeners are people who have no idea of these things. How often, in a rural spot, would the pencil drop from their hands, as it did from Le Nostre's in St. James's Park, if they knew like him what gave life to nature, and interested the beholder!

not seen; but in such a costly manner, and kept up at such a vast expence, that that single idea destroyed all the pleasure I had in viewing them. There were rocks, grottos, and artificial cascades, in level and sandy places, where there was nothing but spring-water; there were flowers and curious plants of all the climates in China and Tartary, collected and cultivated in the same soil. It is true, there were no fine walks or regular compartments; but you might see curiosities heaped together with profusion, which in nature are only to be found separate and scattered. Nature was there represented under a thousand various forms; and yet the whole, taken together, was not natural. Here neither earth nor stone are transplanted; you have neither pumps nor reservoirs; you have no occasion for green-houses, or stoves, or bell-glasses, or straw-beds. A plain spot of ground has been improved by a few simple ornaments. A few common herbs and trees, and a few purling streams, which flow without pomp or constraint, have contributed to embellish it. It is an amusement which has cost little trouble, and the simplicity of it is an additional pleasure to the beholder. I can conceive that this place might be made still more agreeable, and yet be infinitely less pleasing to me. Such, for example, is Lord Cobham's celebrated park at Stowe. It consists of places extremely beautiful and picturesque, modelled after the fashion of different countries, and in which every thing appears natural except their conjunction, as in the gardens of China, which I just now mentioned. The proprietor who made this stately solitude, has even erected ruins, temples, old buildings; and different ages, as well as different places, are collected with more than mortal magnificence. This is the very thing I dislike. I would have the amusements of mankind carry an air of ease with them which does not put one in mind of their weakness, and that while we admire

these curiosities, our imagination may not be disturbed by reflecting on the vast sums of money and labour they have cost. Are we not destined to trouble enough, without making our amusements a fatigue?

"I have but one objection (added I, looking at Eloisa,) to make to your Elysium, but which you will probably think of some weight, which is, that it is a superfluous amusement. To what purpose was it to make a new walk, when you have such beautiful groves on the other side of the house, which you neglect?"—"That is true, (said she, somewhat disconcerted;) but I like this better."—"If you had thoroughly reflected on the propriety of your question before you had made it, (said M. Wolmar, interrupting us,) it might be imputed to you as more than an indiscretion. My wife has never set her foot in those groves since she has been married. I know the reason, though she has always kept it a secret from me. You, who are no stranger to it, learn to respect the spot where you are; it has been planted by the hands of virtue."

I had scarce received this just reprimand, when the little family, led by Fanny, came in, as we were going out. These three lovely children ran and embraced their parents; I likewise shared their little caresses. Eloisa and I returned into Elysium, to take a little turn with them; and afterwards went to join M. Wolmar, who was talking to some workmen. In our way, she told me, that she no sooner became a mother, than an idea struck into her mind, with respect to that walk, which increased her zeal for embellishing it. "I had an eye (said she) to the health and amusement of my children as they grew up. It requires more care than labour to keep up this place; it is more essential to give a certain turn to the branches of the plants, than to dig and cultivate the ground: I intend one day to make gardeners of my little

ones: they shall have sufficient exercise to strengthen their constitution, and not enough to enfeeble it. Besides, what is too much for their age shall be done by others, and they shall confine themselves to such little works as may amuse them. I cannot describe (said she) what pleasure I enjoy in imagining my infants busy in returning those little attentions which I now bestow on them with such satisfaction, and the joy of which their tender hearts will be susceptible, when they see their mother walking with delight under the shades which have been formed by their own hands. In truth, my friend, (said she,) with an affecting tone, time thus spent is an emblem of the felicity of the next world; and it was not without reason, that, reflecting on these scenes, I christened this place before-hand by the name of Elysium." My Lord, this incomparable woman is as amiable in the character of a mother as in that of a wife, a friend, a daughter; and to the eternal punishment of my soul, she was thus lovely when my mistress.

Transported with this delightful place, I entreated them in the evening to consent that, during my stay, Fanny should entrust me with her key, and consign to me the office of feeding the birds. Eloisa immediately sent a sack of grain to my chamber, and gave me her own key. I cannot tell for what reason, but I accepted it with a kind of concern, and it seemed as if M. Wolmar's would have been more acceptable to me.

In the morning, I rose early, and, with all the eagerness of a child, went to lock myself in the desart island. What agreeable ideas did I hope to carry with me into that solitary place, where the mild aspect of nature alone was sufficient to banish from my remembrance all that new-coined system which had made me so miserable! All the objects around me will be the work of her whom I adored. In every thing

about me I shall behold her image; I shall see nothing which her hand has not touched; I shall kiss the flowers which have been her carpet; I shall inhale, with the morning dew, the air which she has breathed; the taste she has displayed in her amusements will bring all her charms present to my imagination, and in every thing she will appear the Eloisa of my soul.

As I entered Elysium with this temper of mind, I suddenly recollected the last word which M. Wolmar said to me yesterday very near the same spot. The recollection of that single word instantly changed my whole frame of mind. I thought that I beheld the image of virtue, where I expected to find that of pleasure. That image intruded upon my imagination with the charms of Mrs. Wolmar, and for the first time since my return, I saw Eloisa in her absence; not such as she appeared to me formerly, and as I still love to represent her, but such as she appears to my eyes every day. My Lord, I imagined that I beheld that amiable, that chaste, that virtuous woman, in the midst of the train which surrounded her yesterday. I saw those three lovely children, those honourable and precious pledges of conjugal union and tender friendship, play about her, and give and receive a thousand affecting embraces. At her side I beheld the grave Wolmar, that husband so beloved, so happy, and so worthy of felicity. I imagined that I could perceive his judicious and penetrating eye pierce to the very bottom of my soul, and make me blush again; I fancied that I heard him utter reproaches which I too well deserved, and repeat lectures which I had attended in vain. Last in her train I saw Fanny Regnard, a lively instance of the triumph of virtue and humanity over the most ardent passion. Ah! what guilty thought could reach so far as her, through such an impervious guard! With what indignation I suppressed the shame-

ful transports of a criminal, and scarce extinguished passion, and how I should have despised myself had I contaminated such a ravishing scene of honour and innocence with a single sigh. I recalled to mind the reflections she made as we were going out; then my imagination attending her into that futurity on which she delights to contemplate, I saw that affectionate mother wipe the sweat from her children's foreheads, kiss their ruddy cheeks, and devote that heart, which was formed for love, to the most tender sentiments of nature. There was nothing, even to the very name of Elysium, but what contributed to rectify my rambling imagination, and to inspire my soul with a calm far preferable to the agitation of the most seductive passions. The word Elysium seemed to me an emblem of the purity of her mind who adopted it; and I concluded that she would never have made choice of that name, had she been tormented with a troubled conscience. "Peace (said I) reigns in the inmost recesses of her soul, as in this asylum which she has named."

I proposed to myself an agreeable reverie, and my reflections there were more agreeable even than I expected. I passed two hours in Elysium, which were not inferior to any time I ever spent. In observing with what rapidity and delight they passed away, I perceived that there was a kind of felicity in meditating on honest reflections, which the wicked never know, and which consists in being pleased with one's self. If we were to reflect on this without prejudice, I do not know any other pleasure can equal it. I perceive, at least, that one who loves solitude, as I do, ought to be extremely cautious not to do any thing which may make it tormenting. Perhaps these principles may lead us to discover the spring of the false judgment of mankind with regard to vice and virtue; for the enjoyment of virtue is all internal,

and is only perceived by him who fears it: but all the advantages of vice strike the imagination of others, and only he who has purchased them knows what they cost.

Se a ciascun l' interno affanno
Si legesse in fronte scritto,
Quanti mai, che invidia fanno
Ci farebbero pieta ?*

The aching heart and smiling face
Thus may our envy move,
Which, did we know the wretched's case,
Would our compassion prove.

As it grew late before I perceived it, M. Wolmar came to join me, and acquaint me that Eloisa and the tea waited for me. "It is you yourselves (said I, making an apology,) who prevented my coming sooner: I was so delighted with the evening I spent yesterday, that I went thither again to enjoy this morning; luckily there is no harm done, and as you have waited for me, my morning is not lost."—"That is true (said M. Wolmar); it would be better to wait till noon, than lose the pleasure of breakfasting together. Stran-

* He might have added the conclusion, which is very fine, and as apposite to the subject:

Si vedria che i lor nemici
Anno in seno, e si reduce
Nel parere a noi felici
Ogni lor felicita.

So when, reduc'd or bent with years,
Poor mortals sigh for rest,
Each, wretched as he yet appears,
With something still is blest.

gers are never admitted into my room in the morning, but breakfast in their own. Breakfast is the repast of intimates; servants are excluded, and impertinents never appear at that time; we then declare all we think, we reveal all our secrets, we disguise none of our sentiments; we can then enjoy the delights of intimacy and confidence, without indiscretion. It is almost the only time in which we are allowed to appear what we really are: why cannot it last the day through!"—Ah Eloisa! (I was ready to say,) this is an interesting wish! but I was silent. The first thing I learnt to suppress with my love, was flattery. To praise people to their face is but to tax them with vanity. You know, my Lord, whether Mrs. Wolmar deserves this reproach. No; I respect her too much, not to respect her silence. Is it not a sufficient commendation of her, to listen to her, and observe her conduct?

LETTER CXXXI.

FROM MRS. WOLMAR TO MRS. ORBE.

It is decreed, my dear friend, that you are on all occasions to be my protectress against myself, and that after having delivered me from the snares which my affections laid for me, you are yet to rescue me from those which reason spreads to entrap me. After so many cruel instances, I have learned to guard against mistakes, as much as against my passions, which are frequently the cause of them. Why had I not the same precaution always! If in time past I had relied less on the light of my own understanding, I should have had less reason to blush at my sentiments.

Do not be alarmed at this preamble. I should be unworthy your friendship, if I was still under a necessity of

consulting you upon dismal subjects. Guilt was always a stranger to my heart, and I dare believe it to be more distant from me now than ever. Therefore, Clara, attend to me patiently, and believe that I shall never need your advice in difficulties which honour alone can resolve.

During these six years which I have lived with M. Wolmar in the most perfect union which can subsist between a married couple, you know that he never talked to me either about his family, or himself; and that having received him from a father as solicitous for his daughter's happiness as jealous of the honour of his family, I never expressed any eagerness to know more of his concerns than he thought proper to communicate. Satisfied with being indebted to him for my honour, my repose, my reason, my children, and all that can render me estimable in my own eyes, besides the life of him who gave me being, I was convinced that the particulars concerning him, to which I was a stranger, would not falsify what I knew of him, and there was no occasion for my knowing more, in order to love, esteem, and honour him, as much as possible.

This morning at breakfast he proposed our taking a little walk before the heat of the day came on; then, under a pretence of not going through the country in a morning dishabille, as he said, he led us into the woods, and exactly into that wood where all the misfortunes of my life commenced. As I approached that fatal spot, I felt a violent palpitation of heart, and should have refused to have gone in, if shame had not checked me, and if the recollection of a word which dropped the other day in Elysium had not made me dread the interpretations which might have been passed on such a refusal. I do not know whether the philosopher was more composed; but some time after, having cast my eyes upon

him by chance, I found his countenance pale and altered, and I cannot express to you the uneasiness it gave me.

On entering into the wood, I perceived my husband cast a glance towards me, and smile. He sat down between us, and after a moment's pause, taking us both by the hand, "My dear children, (said he,) I begin to perceive that my schemes will not be fruitless, and that we three may be connected by a lasting attachment, capable of promoting our common good, and procuring me some comfort to alleviate the troubles of approaching old age: but I am better acquainted with you two than you are with me; it is but just to make every thing equal among us, and though I have nothing very interesting to impart, yet as you have no secrets hidden from me, I will have none concealed from you."

He then revealed to us the mystery of his birth, which had hitherto been known to no one but my father. When you are acquainted with it, you will imagine what great temper and moderation a man must be master of, who was able to conceal such a secret from his wife during six years; but it is no pain to him to keep such a secret, and he thinks too slightly of it, to be obliged to exert any vast efforts to conceal it.

"I will not detain you (said he) with relating the occurrences of my life. It is of less importance to you to be acquainted with my adventures than with my character. The former are simple in their nature like the latter; and when you know what I am, you will easily imagine what I was capable of doing. My mind is naturally calm, and my affections temperate. I am one of those men whom people think they reproach when they call them insensible; that is, when they upbraid them with having no passion which may impel them to swerve from the true direction of human nature. Being but little susceptible of pleasure or grief, I

receive but faint impressions from those interesting sentiments of humanity, which make the affections of others our own. If I feel uneasiness when I see the worthy in distress, it is not without reason that my compassion is moved, for when I see the wicked suffer, I have no pity for them. My only active principle is a natural love of order, and the concurrence of the accidents of fortune, with the conduct of mankind well combined together, pleases me exactly like beautiful symmetry in a picture, or like a piece well represented on the stage. If I have any ruling passion, it is that of observation: I love to read the hearts of mankind. As my own seldom misleads me, as I make my observations with a disinterested and dispassionate temper, and as I have acquired some sagacity by long experience, I am seldom deceived in my judgment; this advantage, therefore, is the only recompence which self-love receives from my constant studies: for I am not fond of acting a part, but only of observing others. Society is agreeable to me for the sake of contemplation, and not as a member of it. If I could alter the nature of my being, and become a living eye, I would willingly make the exchange. Therefore, my indifference about mankind does not make me independent of them: without being solicitous to be seen, I want to see them, and though they are not dear to me, they are necessary.

"The two first characters in society which I had an opportunity of observing, were courtiers and valets; two orders of men who differ more in appearance than fact, but so little worthy of being attended to, and so easily read, that I was tired of them at first sight. By quitting the court, where every thing is presently seen, I secured myself, without knowing it, from the danger which threatened me, and which I should not have escaped. I changed my name, and having a desire to be acquainted with military men, I solicited ad-

mission into the service of a foreign prince; it was there that I had the happiness of being useful to your father, who was impelled by despair for having killed his friend, to expose himself rashly and contrary to his duty. The grateful and susceptible heart of a brave officer began then to give me a better opinion of human nature. He attached himself to me with that zealous friendship which it was impossible for me not to return, and from that time we formed connections which have every day grown stronger. I discovered in this new state of my mind, that interest is not always, as I had supposed, the sole motive which influences human conduct, and that among the crowd of prejudices which are opposite to virtue, there are some likewise which are favourable to it. I found that the general character of mankind was founded on a kind of self-love indifferent in itself, and either good or bad according to the accidents which modify it, and which depend on customs, laws, rank, fortune, and every circumstance relative to human policy. I, therefore, indulged my inclination, and despising the vain notions of worldly condition, I successively threw myself into all the different situations in life, which might enable me to compare them together, and know one by the other. I perceived, as you have observed in one of your letters, (said he to St. Preux,) that we see nothing if we rest satisfied with looking on; that we ought to act ourselves in order to judge of men's actions; and I made myself an actor, to qualify myself for a spectator. We can always lower ourselves with ease; and I stooped to a variety of situations which no man of my station ever condescended to. I even became a peasant, and when Eloisa made me her gardener, she did not find me such a novice in the business as she might have expected.

"Besides gaining a thorough knowledge of mankind, which indolent philosophy only attains in appearance, I

found another advantage, which I never expected. This was the opportunity it afforded me of improving, by an active life, that love of order I derived from nature, and of acquiring a new relish for virtue, by the pleasure of contributing towards it. This sentiment made me less speculative, attached me somewhat more to myself, and from a natural consequence of this progress, I perceived that I was alone. Solitude, which was always tiresome to me, became hideous, and I could not hope to escape it long. Though I did not grow less dispassionate, I found the want of some connection; the idea of decay, without any one to comfort me, afflicted me by anticipation, and for the first time in my life, I experienced melancholy and uneasiness. I communicated my troubles to the Baron d'Etange. "You must not (said he) grow an old batchelor. I myself, after having lived independent as it were, in a state of matrimony, find that I have a desire of returning to the duties of a husband and a father, and I am going to repose myself in the midst of my family. It depends on yourself to make my family your own, and to supply the place of the son whom I have lost. I have an only daughter to marry; she is not destitute of merit; she has a sensibility of mind, and the love of her duty makes her love every thing relative to it. She is neither a beauty nor a prodigy of understanding: but come and see her, and believe me, that if she does not affect you, no woman will ever make an impression on you." I came; I saw you, Eloisa; and found that your father had reported modestly of you. Your transports, the tears of joy you shed when you embraced him, gave me the first, or rather the only emotion I ever experienced in my life. If the impression was slight, it was the only one I felt, and our sensations are strong only in proportion to those which oppose them. Three years absence made no change in my inclinations. I was

no stranger to the state of yours on my return, and on this occasion I must make you a return for the confession which has cost you so dear."——Judge, my dear Clara, with what extraordinary surprise I learnt that all my secrets had been discovered to him before our marriage, and that he had wedded me, knowing me to be the property of another.

"This conduct (continued M. Wolmar) was unpardonable. I offended against delicacy; I sinned against prudence; I exposed your honour and my own; I should have been apprehensive of plunging you and myself into irretrievable calamities; but I loved you, and I loved nothing but you. Every thing else was indifferent to me. How is it possible to restrain a passion, be it ever so weak, when it has no counterpoise? This is the inconvenience of calm and dispassionate tempers. Every thing goes right while their insensibility secures them from temptations; but if one happens to touch them, they are conquered as soon as they are attacked, and reason, which governs while she sways alone, has no power to resist the slightest effort. I was tempted but once, and I gave way to it. If the intoxication of any other passion had rendered me wavering, I should have fallen, every false step I took; none but spirited souls are able to struggle and conquer. All great efforts, all sublime actions, are their province; cool reason never achieved any thing illustrious, and we can only triumph over our passions by opposing one against another. When virtue gains the ascendancy, she reigns alone, and keeps all in due poise; this forms the true philosopher, who is as much exposed to the assaults of passion as another, but who alone is capable of subduing them by their own force, as a pilot steers through adverse winds.

"You find that I do not attempt to extenuate my fault:

had it been one, I should infallibly have committed it; but I knew you, Eloisa, and was guilty of none when I married you. I perceived that all my prospect of happiness depended on you alone, and that if any one was capable of making you happy, it was myself. I knew that peace and innocence were essential to your mind, that the affection with which it was pre-engaged could not afford them, and that nothing could banish love but the horror of guilt. I saw that your soul laboured under an oppression which it could not shake off but by some new struggle, and that, to make you sensible how valuable you still were, was the only way to render you truly estimable.

"Your heart was formed for love; I, therefore, slighted the disproportion of age, which excluded me from a right of pretending to that affection, which he who was the object of it could not enjoy, and which it was impossible to obtain for any other. On the contrary, finding my life half spent, and that I had been susceptible but of a single impression, I concluded that it would be lasting, and I pleased myself with the thoughts of preserving it the rest of my days. In all my tedious searches, I found nothing so estimable as yourself; I thought that what you could not effect, no one in the world could accomplish; I ventured to rely on your virtue, and I married you. The secrecy you observed did not surprize me: I knew the reason, and from your prudent conduct I guessed how long it would last. From a regard to you, I copied your reserve, and I would not deprive you of the honour of one day making me a confession, which I plainly perceived was at your tongue's end every minute. I have not been deceived in any particular; you have fully answered all I expected from you. When I made choice of a wife, I desired to find in her an amiable, discreet, and happy compa-

nion. The first two requisites have been obtained. I hope, my dear, that we shall not be disappointed of the third."

At these words, in spite of all my endeavours not to interrupt him by my tears, I could not forbear throwing myself round his neck, and crying out, "O my dear husband! O thou best and most amiable of men! tell me what is wanting to complete my happiness, but to promote your felicity, and to be more deserving?"—"You are as happy as you can be, (said he, interrupting me); you deserve to be so; but it is time to enjoy that felicity in peace, which has hitherto cost you such vast pains. If your fidelity had been all I required, that would have been insured the moment you made me the promise; I wanted, moreover, to make it easy and agreeable to you, and we have both laboured to this end in concert, without communicating our views to each other. Eloisa, we have succeeded better than you imagine, perhaps. The only fault I find in you is, that you do not resume that confidence which you have a right to repose in yourself, and that you undervalue your own worth. Extreme diffidence is as dangerous as excessive confidence. As that rashness which prompts us to attempts beyond our strength renders our power ineffectual, so that timidity which prevents us from relying on ourselves, renders it useless. True prudence consists in being thoroughly acquainted with the measure of our own power, and acting up to it. You have acquired an increase of strength by changing your condition. You are no longer that unfortunate girl who bewailed the weakness she indulged; you are the most virtuous of women; you are bound by no laws but those of honour and duty; and the only fault that can now be imputed to you is, that you retain too lively a sense of your former indiscretions. Instead of taking reproachful precautions against yourself, learn to de-

pend upon yourself, and your confidence will increase your strength. Banish that injurious diffidence, and think yourself happy in having made choice of an honest man, at an age which is liable to imposition, and in having entertained a lover formerly, whom you may now enjoy as a friend, even under your husband's eye. I was no sooner made acquainted with your connections than I judged of you by each other. I perceived what enthusiastic delusion led you astray; it never operates but on susceptible minds; it sometimes ruins them, but it is by a charm which has power to seduce them alone. I judged that the same turn of mind which formed your attachment, would break it as soon as it became criminal, and that vice might find an entrance, but never take root in such hearts as yours.

"I conceived moreover, that the connection between you ought not to be broken; that there were so many laudable circumstances attending your mutual attachment, that it ought rather to be rectified than destroyed; and that neither of the two could forget the other, without diminishing their own worth. I knew that great struggles only served to inflame strong passions, and if violent efforts exercise the mind, they occasion such torments as by their continuance might subdue it. I took advantage of Eloisa's gentleness to moderate the severity of her reflections. I nourished her friendship for you (said he to St. Preux); I banished all immoderate passion, and I believe that I have preserved you a greater share of her affections than she would have left you had I abandoned her entirely to herself.

"My success encouraged me, and I determined to attempt your cure as I had accomplished hers; for I had an esteem for you, and notwithstanding the prejudices of vice, I have always observed that every good end is to be obtained from susceptible minds, by means of confidence and sincerity. I

saw you; you did not deceive me; you will not deceive me; and though you are not yet what you ought to be, I find you more improved than you imagine, and I am better satisfied with you than you are with yourself. I know that my conduct has an extravagant appearance, and is repugnant to the common received principles. But maxims become less general, in proportion as we are better acquainted with the human heart; and Eloisa's husband ought not to act like common men. My dear children (said he, with a tone the more affecting as it came from a dispassionate man), remain what you are, and we shall all be happy. Danger consists chiefly in opinion; be not afraid of yourselves, and you will have nothing to apprehend; only think on the present, and I will answer for the future. I cannot communicate any thing further to-day, but if my schemes succeed, and my hopes do not betray me, our destiny will be better fulfilled, and you too will be much happier than if you had enjoyed each other."

As we rose, he embraced us, and would have us likewise embrace each other, on that spot—on that very spot where formerly——Clara, O my dear Clara, how dearly have you ever loved me! I made no resistance. Alas! how indiscreet would it have been to have made any! This kiss was nothing like that which rendered the grove terrible to me. I silently congratulated myself, and I found that my heart was more changed than I had hitherto ventured to imagine. . . .

As we were walking towards home, my husband, taking me by the hand, stopped me, and showing me the wood we had just left, he said to me, smiling, "Eloisa, be no longer afraid of this asylum; it has not been lately profaned." You will not believe me, cousin, but I swear that he has some supernatural gift of reading one's inmost thoughts; may Heaven continue it to him!—Having such reason to despise

myself, it is certainly to this art that I am indebted for his indulgence.

You do not see yet any occasion I have for your advice; patience, my angel! I am coming to that point; but the conversation which I have related was necessary to clear up what follows.

On our return, my husband, who has long been expected at Etange, told me that he proposed going thither to-morrow, that he should see you in his way, and that he should stay there five or six days. Without saying all I thought concerning such an ill-timed journey, I told him, that I imagined the necessity was not so indispensable as to oblige M. Wolmar to leave his guest, whom he had himself invited to his house. "Would you have me (he replied) use ceremony with him, to remind him that he is not at home? I am like the Valaisans for hospitality. I hope he will find their sincerity here, and allow us to use their freedom." Perceiving that he would not understand me, I took another method, and endeavoured to persuade our guest to take the journey with him. "You will find a spot (said I) which has its beauties, and such as you are fond of; you will visit my patrimony, and that of my ancestors; the interest you take in every thing which concerns me, will not allow me to suppose that such a sight can be indifferent to you." My mouth was open to add, that the castle was like that of Lord B——, — who . . . . but luckily I had time to bite my tongue. He answered me coolly, that I was in the right, and that he would do as I pleased. But M. Wolmar, who seemed determined to drive me to an extremity, replied, that he should do what was most agreeable to himself. "Which do you like best, to go or to stay?"—"To stay," (said he, without hesitating). "Well, stay then (rejoined my husband, taking him by the hand): you are a sincere and honest man, and I

am well pleased with that declaration." There was no room for much altercation between my husband and me, and in the hearing of this third person. I was silent, but could not conceal my uneasiness so well but my husband perceived it. "What! (said he, with an air of discontent, St. Preux being at a little distance from us,) shall I have pleaded your cause against yourself in vain, and will Mrs. Wolmar remain satisfied with a virtue which depends on opportunity? For my part, I am more nice; I will be indebted for the fidelity of my wife to her affection, not to chance; and it is not enough that she is constant, it wounds my delicacy to think that she should doubt her constancy."

At length he took us into the closet, where I was extremely surprized to see him take from a drawer, along with the copies of some of our friend's correspondences, which I delivered to him, the very original letters which I thought I had seen burned by B—— in my mother's room. "Here (said he to me, shewing them to us) are the pledges of my security; if they deceive me, it would be a folly to depend on any thing which concerns human nature. I consign my wife and my honour in charge to her, who, when single and seduced, preferred an act of benevolence to a secure and private rendezvous. I trust Eloisa, now that she is a wife and a mother, to him, who, when he had it in his power to gratify his desires, yet knew how to respect Eloisa when single, and a fond girl. If either of you think so meanly of yourselves, as to suppose that I am in the wrong, say so, and I retract this instant." Cousin, do you think that one could easily venture to make answer to such a speech?

I nevertheless sought an opportunity, in the afternoon, of speaking with my husband in private, and without entering into reasons which I was not at liberty to urge, I only entreated him to put off his journey for two days. My re-

quest was granted immediately, and I employ the time in sending you this express, and waiting for your answer, to know how I am to act.

I know that I need but desire my husband not to go at all, and he who never denied me any thing will not refuse me so slight a favour. But I perceive, my dear, that he takes a pleasure in the confidence he reposes in me, and I am afraid of forfeiting some share of his esteem, if he should suppose that I have occasion for more reserve than he allows me. I know, likewise, that I need but speak a word to St. Preux, and that he will accompany my husband without hesitation; but what will my husband think of the change; and can I take such a step without preserving an air of authority over St. Preux, which might seem to entitle him to some privileges in his turn? Besides, I am afraid, lest he should conclude from this precaution, that I find it absolutely necessary, and this step, which at first sight appears most easy, is the most dangerous perhaps at the bottom. Upon the whole, however, I am not ignorant that no consideration should be put in competition with a real danger; but does this danger exist in fact? This is the very doubt which you must resolve for me.

The more I examine the present state of my mind, the more I find to encourage me. My heart is spotless, my conscience calm; I have no symptoms of fear or uneasiness; and with respect to every thing which passes within me, my sincerity before my husband costs me no trouble. Not but that certain involuntary recollections sometimes occasion tender emotions, from which I had rather be exempt; but these recollections are so far from being produced by the sight of him who was the original cause of them, that they seem to be less frequent since his return; and however agreeable it is to me to see him, yet I know not from what strange hu-

mour, it is more agreeable to me to think of him. In a word, I find that I do not even require the aid of virtue, in order to be composed in his presence, and, exclusive of the horror of guilt, it would be very difficult to revive those sentiments which virtue has extinguished.

But is it sufficient, my dear, that my heart encourages me, when reason ought to alarm me? I have forfeited the right of depending on my own strength. Who will answer that my confidence, even now, is not an illusion of vice? How shall I rely on those sentiments which have so often deceived me? Does not guilt always spring from that pride which prompts us to despise temptation; and when we defy those dangers which have occasioned our fall, does it not show a disposition to yield again to temptation?

Weigh all these circumstances, my dear Clara, you will find that though they may be trifling in themselves, they are of sufficient importance to merit attention, when you consider the object they concern. Deliver me from the uncertainty into which they have thrown me. Show me how I must behave in this critical conjuncture; for my past errors have affected my judgment, and rendered me diffident in deciding upon any thing. Whatever you may think of yourself, your mind, I am certain, is tranquil and composed; objects present themselves to you such as they are; but in mine, which is agitated like a troubled sea, they are confounded and disfigured. I no longer dare to depend upon any thing I see, or any thing I feel, and, notwithstanding so many years repentance, I perceive, with concern, that the weight of past failings is a burthen we must bear to the end of our lives.

LETTER CXXXII.

ANSWER.

Poor Eloisa! With so much reason to live at ease, what torments you continually create! All thy misfortunes come from thyself, O Israel! If you adhered to your own maxims; if, in point of sentiment, you only hearkened to the voice within you, and your heart did but silence your reason, you would then, without scruple, trust to that security it inspires, and you would not constrain yourself, against the testimony of your own heart, to dread a danger which can arise only from thence.

I understand you, I perfectly understand you, Eloisa; being more secure in yourself than you pretend to be, you have a mind to humble yourself, on account of your past failings, under a pretence of preventing new ones; and your scruples are not so much precautions against the future, as a penance you impose upon yourself, to atone for the indiscretion which formerly ruined you. You compare the times! do you consider? Compare situations likewise, and remember that I then reproved you for your confidence, as I now reprove you for your diffidence.

You are mistaken, my dear; but nature does not alter so soon. If we can forget our situation for want of reflection, we see it in its true light when we take pains to consider it, and we can no more conceal from ourselves our virtues than our vices. Your gentleness and devotion have given you a turn for humility. Mistrust that dangerous virtue, which only excites self-love, by making it centre in one point; and be assured, that the noble sincerity of an upright mind is greatly preferable to the pride of humility. If moderation is

necessary in wisdom, it is requisite, likewise, in those precautions it suggests, lest a solicitude which is reproachful to virtue should debase the mind, and, by keeping us in constant alarm, render a chimerical danger a real one. Do not you perceive, that after we have had a fall, we should hold ourselves upright, and that by leaning too much towards the side opposite to that on which we fell, we are in danger of falling again? Cousin, you loved like Eloisa. Now, like her, you are an extravagant devotee; I hope you will be more successful in the latter than you were in the former! In truth, if I was less acquainted with your natural timidity, your apprehensions would be sufficient to terrify me in my turn: and if I were so scrupulous, I might, from being alarmed for you, begin to tremble for myself.

Consider further, my dear friend; you whose system of morality is as easy and natural as it is pure and honest, do not make constructions which are harsh and foreign to your character, with respect to your maxims concerning the separation of the sexes. I agree with you that they ought not to live together, nor after the same manner; but consider whether this important rule does not admit of many distinctions in point of practice; examine whether it ought to be applied indiscriminately, and without exception, to married as well as to single women, to society in general as well as to particular connections, to business as well as to amusements, and whether that honour and decency which inspire these maxims, ought not sometimes to regulate them? In well-governed countries, where the natural relations of things are attended to in matrimony, you would admit of assemblies where young persons of both sexes might see, be acquainted, and associate with each other; but you prohibit them with good reason, from holding any private intercourse. But is not the case quite different with regard to married

women and the mothers of families, who can have no interest that is justifiable, in exhibiting themselves in public; who are confined within doors by their domestic concerns, and who should not be refused to do any thing at home which is becoming the mistress of a family? I should not like to see you in the cellars, presenting the wine for the merchants to taste, nor to see you leave your children, to settle accounts with a banker; but if an honest man should come to visit your husband, or to transact some business with him, will you refuse to entertain his guest in his absence, and to do him the honours of the house, for fear of being left alone with him? Trace this principle to its source, and it will explain all your maxims. Why do we suppose that women ought to live retired and apart from the men? Shall we do such injustice to our sex, as to account for it upon principles drawn from our weakness, and that it is only to avoid the danger of temptations? No, my dear, these unworthy apprehensions do not become an honest woman, and the mother of a family, who is continually surrounded with objects which cherish in her the sentiments of honour, and who is devoted to the most respectable duties of human nature. It is nature herself that divides us from the men, by prescribing to us different occupations; it is that amiable and timorous modesty, which, without being immediately attentive to chastity, is nevertheless its surest guardian; it is that cautious and affecting reserve, which at one and the same time cherishing both desire and respect in the hearts of men, serves as a kind of coquetry to virtue. This is the reason why even husbands themselves are not excepted out of this rule. This is the reason why the most discreet women generally maintain the greatest ascendancy over their husbands; because, by the help of this prudent and discreet reserve, without showing any caprice or non-compliance, they know,

even in the embraces of the most tender union, how to keep them at a distance, and prevent their being cloyed with them. You will agree with me, that your maxims are too general not to admit of exceptions, and that not being founded on any rigorous duty, the same principle of decorum which established them may sometimes justify our dispensing with them.

The circumspection which you ground on your past failings is injurious to your present condition; I will never pardon this unnecessary caution which your heart dictates, and I can scarce forgive it in your reason. How! was it possible that the rampart which protects your person could not secure you from such ignominious apprehensions? How could my cousin, my sister, my friend, my Eloisa, confound the indiscretions of a girl of too much sensibility, with the infidelity of a guilty wife? Look around you, you will see nothing but what contributes to raise and support your mind. Your husband, who has such confidence in you, and whose esteem it becomes you to justify; your children, whom you would train to virtue, and who will one day deem it an honour that you was their mother; your venerable father, who is so dear to you, who enjoys your felicity, and who derives more lustre from you than from his ancestors; your friend, whose fate depends on your's, and to whom you must be accountable for a reformation to which she has contributed; her daughter, to whom you ought to set an example of those virtues which you would excite in her; your philosopher, who is an hundred times fonder of your virtues than of your person, and who respects you still more than you apprehend; lastly, yourself, who are sensible what painful efforts your discretion has cost you, and who will surely never forfeit the fruit of so much trouble in a single moment; how many motives capable of inspiring you with courage conspire to

make you ashamed of having ventured to mistrust yourself! But, in order to answer for my Eloisa, what occasion have I to consider what she is? It is enough that I know what she was, during the indiscretions which she bewails. Ah! if your heart had ever been capable of infidelity, I would allow you to be continually apprehensive: but at the very time when you imagined that you viewed it at a distance, you may conceive the horror its real existence would have occasioned you, by what you felt at that time, when but to imagine it, had been to have committed it.

I recollect with what astonishment we learnt that there was a nation where the weakness of a fond maid is considered as an inexpiable crime, though the adultery of a married woman is there softened by the gentle term of gallantry, and where married women publicly make themselves amends for the short-lived restraint they undergo when single. I know what maxims, in this respect, prevail in high life, where virtue passes for nothing, where every thing is empty appearance, where crimes are effaced by the difficulty of proving them, or where the proof itself becomes ridiculous against custom. But you, Eloisa, you who glowed with a pure and constant passion, who was guilty only in the eyes of men, and between heaven and earth was open to no reproach! You, who made yourself respected in the midst of your indiscretions; you, who being abandoned to fruitless regret, obliged us even to adore those virtues which you had forfeited; you, who disdained to endure self-contempt, when every thing seemed to plead in your excuse; can you be apprehensive of guilt, after having paid so dearly for your weakness? Will you dare to be afraid that you have less power now than you had in those days which cost you so many tears? No, my dear, so far from being alarmed at your former indiscretions, they ought to inspire you with courage; so severe a repen-

tance does not lead to remorse, and whoever is so susceptible of shame, will never bid defiance to infamy.

If ever a weak mind had supports against its weakness, they are such as uphold you; if ever a vigorous mind was capable of supporting itself, what prop can your's require? Tell me, what reasonable grounds there can be for your apprehensions? All your life has been a continual struggle, in which, even after your defeat, honour and duty never ceased opposition, and at length came off victorious. Ah! Eloisa! shall I believe that, after so much pain and torment, after twelve years passed in tears, and six spent gloriously, that you still dread a trial of eight days? In few words, deal sincerely with yourself; if there be really any danger, save your person, and blush at the condition of your heart; if there is no danger, it is an offence to your reason, it is a dishonour to your virtue to be apprehensive of perils, which can never affect it. Do you not know that there are some scandalous temptations which never approach noble minds; that it is even shameful to be under a necessity of subduing them, and that to take precautions against them, is not so much to humble, as to debase ourselves?

I do not presume to give you my arguments as unanswerable, but only to convince you that your's may be controverted, and that is sufficient to warrant my advice. Do not depend on yourself, for you do not know how to do yourself justice; nor on me, who even in your indiscretions never considered any thing but your heart, and always adored you; but refer to your husband, who sees you such as you are, and judges of you exactly according to your real worth. Being, like all people of sensibility, ready to judge ill of those who appear insensible, I mistrusted his power of penetration into the secrets of susceptible minds; but since the arrival of our traveller, I find by his letters that he reads your's perfectly

well, and that there is not a single emotion which escapes his observation. I find his remarks so just and acute, that I have almost changed my opinion to the other extreme; and I shall readily believe that your dispassionate people, who consult their eyes more than their hearts, judge better of other men's passions than your impetuous, lively, and vain persons like myself, who always begin by supposing themselves in another's place, and can never see any thing but what they feel. However it be, M. Wolmar is thoroughly acquainted with you, he esteems you, he loves you, and his destiny is blended with your's. What does he require, but that you would leave to him the entire direction of your conduct, with which you are afraid to trust yourself? Perhaps, finding old age coming on, he is desirous, by some trials on which he may depend, to prevent those uneasy jealousies, which an old husband generally feels who is married to a young wife; perhaps the design he has in view requires that you should live in a state of familiarity with your friend, without alarming either your husband or yourself; perhaps he only means to give you a testimony of confidence and esteem, worthy of that which he entertains for you. You should never oppose such sentiments, as if the weight of them was too much for you to endure; and for my part, I think that you cannot act more agreeably to the dictates of prudence and modesty, than by relying entirely on his tenderness and understanding.

Could you, without offending M. Wolmar, punish yourself for a vanity you never had, and prevent a danger which no longer exists? Remain alone with the philosopher, use all the superfluous precautions against him which would formerly have been of such service to you; maintain the same reserve as if you still mistrusted your own heart and his, as well as your own virtue. Avoid all pathetic conversation, all ten-

der recollection of times past; break off or prevent long private interviews; be constantly surrounded by your children; do not stay long with him in a room, in Elysium, or in the grove, notwithstanding the profanation. Above all things, use these precautions in so natural a manner, that they may seem to be the effect of chance, and that he may never once suspect that you are afraid of him. You love to go upon the water, but you deprive yourself of the pleasure, on account of your husband, who is afraid of that element, and of your children, whom you do not choose to venture there. Take the advantage of this absence, to entertain yourself with this recreation, and leave your children to the care of Fanny. By this means you may securely devote yourself to the sweet familiarity of friendship, and quietly enjoy a long *tête-à-tête* under the protection of the waterman, who sees without understanding, and from whom we cannot go far without thinking what we are about.

A thought strikes me, which many people would laugh at, but which will be agreeable to you, I am sure; that is, to keep an exact journal in your husband's absence, to shew him on his return, and to think on this journal, with regard to every circumstance which is to be set down in it. In truth, I do not believe that such an expedient would be of service to many women; but a sincere mind, incapable of deceit, has many resources against vice, which others stand in need of. We ought to despise nothing which tends to preserve a purity of manners, and it is by means of trifling precautions, that great virtues are secured.

Upon the whole, as your husband is to see me in his way, he will tell me, I hope, the true reasons of his journey, and if I do not find them substantial, I will persuade him from proceeding any further; or, at all events, I will do what he has refused to do: upon this you may depend. In the mean

time, I think I have said enough to fortify you against a trial of eight days. Go, Eloisa, I know you too well, not to answer for you as much, nay more than I could for myself. You will always be what you ought to be, and what you desire to be. If you do but rely on the integrity of your own mind, you will run no risk whatever; for I have no faith in these unforeseen defects; it is in vain to disguise voluntary failings by the idle appellation of weaknesses; no woman was ever yet overcome who had not an inclination to surrender; and if I thought that such a fate could attend you, believe me, trust to the tenderness of my friendship, rely on all the sentiments which would arise in the heart of your poor Clara, I should be too sensibly interested in your protection, to abandon you entirely to yourself.

As to what M. Wolmar declared to you, concerning the intelligence he received before your marriage, I am not much surprized at it; you know I always suspected it; and I will tell you, moreover, that my suspicions are not confined to the indiscretions of B——. I could never suppose that a man of truth and integrity like your father, and who had some suspicions at least himself, would resolve to impose upon his son-in-law and his friend. If he engaged you so strictly to secrecy, it was because the mode of discovery would come from him in a very different manner to what it would have proceeded from you; and because he was willing, no doubt, to give it a turn less likely to disgust M. Wolmar, than that which he very well knew you would not fail to give it yourself. But I must dismiss your messenger; we will chat about these matters more at our leisure about a month hence.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, I have preached long enough to the preacher; resume your old occupation——I find myself quite uneasy that I cannot be with you yet. I disorder

all my affairs, by hurrying to dispatch them, and I scarce know what to do. Ah, Chailliot, Chailliot, . . . If I was less giddy . . . but I always hope that I shall————

P. S.—Apropos; I forgot to make my compliments to your highness. Tell me, I beseech you, is the gentleman your husband Atteman, Knes, or Boyard* ? O poor child ! You, who have so often lamented being born a gentlewoman, are very fortunate to become the wife of a Prince ! Between ourselves, nevertheless, you discover apprehensions which are somewhat vulgar for a woman of such high quality. Do not you know, that little scruples belong to mean people ; and that a child of a good family, who should pretend to be his father's son, would be laughed at !

LETTER CXXXIII.

M. WOLMAR TO MRS. ORBE.

I AM going to Etange, my sweet cousin, and I proposed to call upon you in my way ; but a delay, of which you are the cause, obliges me to make more haste, and I had rather lie at Lausanne as I come back, that I may pass a few hours the more with you. Besides, I want to consult you with regard to many particulars, which it is proper to communicate beforehand, that you may have time to consider them before you give me your opinion.

I would not explain my scheme to you in relation to the young man, till his presence had confirmed the good opinion I had conceived of him. I think I may now depend upon him sufficiently to acquaint you, between ourselves, that my

* Mrs. Orbe was ignorant, however, that the first two names are titles of distinction, in Russia : but Boyard is only that of a private gentleman.

design is to entrust him with the education of my children. I am not ignorant that these important concerns are the principal duty of a parent; but when it will be time to exert them, I shall be too old to discharge them, and being naturally calm and speculative by constitution, I should never have been sufficiently active to govern the spirit of youth. Besides, for a reason you know*, Eloisa would be concerned to see me assume an office, in which I should never acquit myself to her liking. I have a thousand reasons besides; your sex is not equal to these duties; their mother shall confine herself to the education of her Harriet; to your share I allot the management of the household upon the plan already established, and of which you approve; and it shall be my business to behold three worthy people concurring to promote the happiness of the family, and to enjoy that repose in my old age, for which I shall be indebted to their labours.

I have always found, that my wife was extremely averse from trusting her children to the care of mercenaries, and I could not discommend her scruples. The respectable capacity of a preceptor requires so many talents which are not to be paid for, so many virtues which have no price set upon them, that it is in vain to think of procuring one by means of money. It is from a man of genius only that we can expect the talents of a preceptor; it is from the heart of an affectionate friend alone that we can hope to meet with the zeal of a parent; and genius is not to be sold any more than attachment.

All the requisite qualities seem to be united in your friend; and if I am well acquainted with his disposition, I do not think he would desire greater happiness, than to make those

* The reader is not yet acquainted with this reason; but he is desired not to be impatient.

beloved children contribute to their mother's felicity. The only obstacle I can foresee is his affection to Lord B——; which will not allow him to disengage himself from so dear a friend, to whom he has such great obligations, at least if his Lordship does not require it himself. We expect to see this extraordinary man very soon: and as you have a great ascendancy over him, if he answers the idea you have given me of him, I may commit the business, so far as it relates to him, to your management.

You have now, my dear cousin, the clue of my whole conduct, which, without this explanation, must have appeared very extraordinary, and which, I hope, will hereafter meet with Eloisa's approbation and your's. The advantage of having such a wife as I have, made me try many expedients which would have been impracticable with another. Though I leave her, in full confidence, with her old lover, under no other guard than her own virtue, it would be madness to establish that lover in my family, before I was certain that he ceased to be such; and how could I be assured of it, if I had a wife on whom I had less dependence?

I have often observed you smile at my remarks on love; but now I think I can mortify you. I have made a discovery which neither you or any other woman, with all the subtlety they attribute to your sex, would ever have made; the proof of which you will nevertheless perceive at first sight, and you will allow it to be equal to demonstration, when I explain to you the principles on which I ground it. Was I to tell you that my young couple are more fond than ever, this undoubtedly would not appear wonderful to you. Was I to assure you, on the contrary, that they are perfectly cured; you know the power of reason and virtue, and therefore you would not look upon that neither as a great miracle: but if I tell you, that both these opposites are true at the same time;

that they love each other with more ardour than ever, and that nothing subsists between them but a virtuous attachment; that they are always lovers, and yet never more than friends: this, I imagine, is what you would least expect, what you will have more difficulty to conceive, and what nevertheless precisely corresponds with truth.

This is the riddle, which makes those frequent contradictions, which you must have observed in them, both in their conversation and in their letters. What you wrote to Eloisa concerning the picture, has served more than any thing to explain the mystery, and I find that they are always sincere, even in contradicting themselves continually. When I say they, I speak particularly of the young man; for as to your friend, one can only speak of her by conjecture. A veil of wisdom and honour make so many folds about her heart, that it is impenetrable to human eyes, even to her own. The only circumstance which leads me to imagine that she has still some distrust to overcome, is, that she is continually considering with herself what she should do if she was perfectly cured; and she examines herself with so much accuracy, that if she was really cured, she would not do it so well.

As to your friend, who, though virtuously inclined, is less apprehensive of his present feelings, I find that he still retains all the affections of his youth; but I perceive them, without having any reason to be offended at them. It is not Eloisa Wolmar he is fond of, but Eloisa Etange; he does not hate me as the possessor of the object I love, but as the ravisher of her whom he doated on. His friend's wife is not his mistress, the mother of two children is not her who was formerly his scholar. It is true, she is very like that person, and often puts him in mind of her. He loves her in the time past. This is the true explanation of the riddle. Deprive him of his memory, and you destroy his love.

This is not an idle subtlety, my pretty cousin, but a solid observation, which, if extended to other affections, may admit of a more general application than one would imagine. I even think that it would not be difficult to explain it by your ideas. At the time you parted the two lovers, their passion was at the highest degree of impetuosity. Perhaps, if they had continued much longer together, they would gradually have grown cool; but their imagination being strongly affected, constantly presented each to the other in the light in which they appeared at the time of their separation. The young man, not perceiving those alterations which the progress of time made in his mistress, loved her such as he had seen her formerly, not such as she was then*. To complete his happiness, it would not have been enough to have given him possession of her, unless she could have been given to him at the same age, and under the same circumstances she was in, when their loves commenced. The least alteration in these particulars would have lessened so much of the felicity he proposed to himself; she is grown handsomer, but she is altered; her improvement, in that sense, turns to her prejudice; for it is of his former mistress, not of any other, that he is enamoured.

* You women are very ridiculous to think of rendering such a frivolous and fluctuating passion as that of love consistent. Every thing in nature is changeable, every thing is continually fluctuating, and yet you would inspire a constant passion! And what right have you to pretend that we must love you for ever, because we loved you yesterday? Then preserve the same face, the same age, the same humour; be always the same, and we will always love you, if we can. But when you alter continually, and require us always to love you, it is, in fact, desiring us every minute not to love you; it is not seeking for constant minds, but looking out for such as are as fickle as your own.

What deceives him, is, that he confounds the times, and often reproaches himself on account of a passion which he thinks present, and which, in fact, is nothing more than the effect of too tender a recollection; but I do not know, whether it will not be better to accomplish his cure, than to undeceive him. Perhaps, in this respect we may reap more advantage from his mistake, than from his better judgment. To discover to him the true state of his affections, would be to apprise him of the death of the object he loved; this might be affliction dangerous to him, inasmuch as a state of melancholy is always favourable to love.

Freed from the scruples which restrain him, he would probably be more inclined to indulge recollections which he ought to stifle; he would converse with less reserve, and the traces of Eloisa are not so effaced in Mrs. Wolmar, but upon examination he might find them again. I have thought, that, instead of undeceiving him with respect to his opinion of the progress he has made, and which encourages him to pursue it to the end, we should rather endeavour to banish the remembrance of these times which he ought to forget, by skilfully substituting other ideas in the room of those he is so fond of. You, who contribute to give them birth, may contribute more than any one to efface them. But I shall wait till we are all together, that I may tell you in your ear what you should do for this purpose; a charge, which, if I am not mistaken, will not be very burdensome to me. In the mean time, I endeavour to make the objects of his dread familiar to him, by presenting them to him in such a manner, that he may no longer think them dangerous. He is impetuous, but tractable, and easily managed. I avail myself of this advantage to give a turn to his imagination. In the room of his mistress, I compel him always to look at the wife of his friend, and the mother of my children; I efface one

picture by another, and hide the past with the present. We always ride a startlish horse up to the object which frights him, that he may not be frightened at it again. We should act in the same manner with those young people, whose imaginations are on fire even after their affections are grown cold, and whose fancy presents monsters at a distance, which disappear as they draw near.

I think I am well acquainted with the strength of both, and I do not expose them to a trial which they cannot support: for wisdom does not consist in using all kind of precautions indiscriminately, but in choosing those which are really useful, and in neglecting such as are superfluous. The eight days during which I leave them together will perhaps be sufficient for them to discover the true state of their minds, and to know in what relation they really stand to each other. The oftener they perceive themselves in private with each other, the sooner they will find out their mistake, by comparing their present sensations with those they felt formerly, when they were in the same situation. Besides, it is of importance that they should use themselves to endure, without danger, that state of familiarity in which they must necessarily live together, if my scheme takes place. I find by Eloisa's conduct, that you have given her advice, which she could not refuse taking, without wronging herself. What pleasure I shall take in giving her this proof that I am sensible of her real worth, if she was a woman with whom a husband might make a merit of such confidence! But, if she gains nothing over her affections, her virtue will still be the same! it will cost her dearer, and she will not triumph the less. Whereas, if she is still in danger of feeling any inward uneasiness, it can arise only from some moving conversation, which she must be too sensible before-hand will awaken re-

collection, and which she will therefore always avoid. Thus, you see, you must not in this instance judge of my conduct by common maxims, but from the motives which actuate me, and from the singular disposition of her towards whom I shall regulate my behaviour.

Farewell, my dear cousin, till my return. Though I have not entered into these explanations with Eloisa, I do not desire you to keep them secret from her. It is a maxim with me, never to make secrets among my friends; therefore, I commit these to your discretion; make such use of them as your prudence and friendship will direct. I know you will do nothing but what is best and most proper.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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